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A LADY'S RIDE

ACROSS SPANISH HONDURAS

W. C-48

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HACIENDA NEAR SAN ANTONIO.

A LADY'S RIDE

ACROSS SPANISH HONDURAS

BY

MARIA SOLTERA

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

W. C-45

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXXIV

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TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF

THE MOST REVEREND

ROGER BEDE VAUGHAN

LATE ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY, N.S.W.

THIS RECORD OF MY WANDERINGS

IS INSCRIBED.

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A LADY'S RIDE ACROSS SPANISH HONDURAS.

CHAPTER I.

It was the question of pounds, shillings, and pence. Should I take steamer from San Francisco to Panama, cross the isthmus, and from the Atlantic side enter Spanish Honduras? or had I better travel by steamer as far as Amapala, and thence take mules and ride across the country to San Pedro Sula—my destination—a distance of about two hundred and nineteen miles? Thus was perplexed the mind of your globe-trotting servant "Soltera," as she pored over railway and steamboat guides and calculated expenses, in her comfortable but very costly bedroom in the Palace Hotel, San Fran-

cisco, in the month of June, in year of grace 1881.

The steamer to Panama! A fine expense! And once arrived at that place, the end of the journey is not by any means reached. After enduring more or less sea-sickness, much thunder, and lightning unlimited, for about twelve days, there would be the further risk of catching the Panama fever.

This fever is often irreverently styled the canal fever (in grim compliment to that cutting), and its general result is to put a decided stop to all plans and locomotion for many a day; often for ever. Should I avoid that misfortune, there would be the certainty of being detained at some miserable place to wait for a vessel going to Puerto Cortez. A bill for "discomfort supplied," at a fearful charge of dollars, would be the inevitable result of that detention.

Arrived at Puerto Cortez, which is also called Puerto Caballo, there would still be fifty miles to travel over mountains, through streams, and upon the ruins of the late Inter-Oceanic Railway of Honduras, till the haven of San Pedro

Sula were reached. So far the one side of the question.

Now for its converse.

Take steamer as far as Amapala, which is the only Pacific port of entry to Spanish Honduras; invade the consulate thereat; make a friend and ally of good Señor Don Pedro Bahl; ask him to provide mules, servant, and muleteer; and thus ride straight and hard for San Pedro Sula. That is the better plan. It will also be the cheaper route; and I shall, by this means, enjoy the mountains I love so well, and see them in all their beauty, the grand Honduras mountains, over which few Englishmen, and still fewer Englishwomen, have ridden!

It has been ascertained, and I have been assured of this from Honduras, that the dangers of this route have been much exaggerated, the chief drawback being the bad roads and the peril of fording some of the streams. There exists also a great difficulty in obtaining food. But I shall have a servant and a muleteer to forage, and I can live as they do for twelve days or so (rash asseveration); and let me only

come by a tolerable supply of milk, and I will travel far and well.

Now falls on my soul the remembrance that I am alone in the world; and at this moment the knowledge brings no pang. No one near of kin exists whose anxieties might deter me; no loving heart will be broken should my portion be evil. Suffering, physical and mental, will fall upon myself solely; and should this expedition end in the "last disaster," there remain those outside the ties of kin, thank God, who will hold me in kindly remembrance and deal gently with my name. Let me forward whilst I have health and willing spirit. I am alone in the world. Yes; but I go with God.

"What are you doing, Soltera? why are you going to San Pedro Sula, and where on earth is the place?" had inquired of me, some weeks previously, my handsome young cousin of the clan Campbell, who had come on board at Auckland, whereat the steamer Australia (in which I formed one of the passengers) touched, from lovely, hospitable Sydney. We were bound to San Francisco, and had to stay a few hours in

Auckland in order to take in the New Zealand contingent of mails and seafarers. This cousin and his wife were bound "home" on a visit, and it was quite in the usual accidental nature of things in travel, that we should thus meet without the slightest provocation thereto on either side.

Rail and steam here gave evidence that the world is small enough to render chance encounters with long-parted friends a common incident.

Apart from the fact that the presence of this relative would contribute to throw an air of respectability over me, I was very glad to meet him, and to secure an auditor as to my plans and intentions.

In answer to his inquiries, I informed Mr Campbell that San Pedro Sula was a large town in the Republic of Honduras, situate about fifty miles, or rather more, off the Atlantic coast, at the foot of a range of mountains, name forgotten. That its climate, according to a pamphlet compiled by the Rev. Dr Pope, is salubrious (it is no such thing—but the nights are bearable); that

a colony of Britons and some French people were being located thereat. In addition to this, the Government of Honduras was granting large concessions of land (quite true), and doing its utmost to get Europeans to make a settlement there.

"What has all this to do with you?" cut in my cousin, who seemed to fear that the whole contents of the pamphlet were about to be let loose upon him.

"Simply this: as I speak Spanish fairly, and can be otherwise useful, I am invited (after some correspondence on the subject) to take charge of the school which is being erected for the colonists' children at San Pedro Sula. A salary has been guaranteed me; and in addition to this, the Government will assign me a plantation of one hundred and sixty acres for the taking it, subject, of course, to its being cultivated and kept in order. Dr Pope writes me that a plantation once put in working trim, requires little further outlay, beyond the first or second year's expenses."

"Who is this Dr Pope?"

"The agent of the Honduras Government and a Catholic priest. He has already located a number of families from Ireland, and he is to return shortly and fetch out four hundred more. The pamphlet is circulated as a proclamation and confirmation of his position to the outside world, and contains, both in the Spanish and the English language, a copy of all the engagements existing between the President of the Republic, Dr Soto, and this agent. There are also published letters of authority from most of the principal persons of the State, the Dutch consul, and the Bishop of Comayagua."

"Coma—what?"

"Comayagua," I replied, "the ancient capital of Spanish Honduras. The seat of government is transferred now to a town which lies further south of Comayagua. The name of this town is Tegucigalpa—perhaps you like that better?"

"Don't chaff a fellow; the names are wonderful! What a country it must be to stand such queer-sounding appellations! Excuse me further. Let me hope that you have not bought any land, or placed money in this agent's hands."

"Certainly not. You know that I have been obliged to increase my pittance by taking pupils in Sydney. I am very, very sorry to part with these dear people; but I am not getting younger, and I want to make a home of my own. This appointment will help me on till I do so. Don't you see?"

"Yes—well—and if it does not do, you can go back again. I don't know much about the matter, but I have always had the impression that the climate out there is rather awful. Hot as fire, is it not?"

"Not among the mountains," I retorted quickly; for a shadow of suspicion must not be allowed to fall upon my beloved mountains. "The climate is unhealthy, and worse, I know, on the sea-coast and low-lying plains; but I shall be very little among these."

"Haven't they a place there called Mosquito? That sounds lively, but decidedly the reverse of pleasant, eh?"

"Mosquito, my good cousin, is another province altogether. Look at the map. You can abuse that as much as you please. San Pedro

Sula, lies in the interior of the country, and is surrounded by the mountains. The only drawback of the situation is, that the town has been placed at their base."

"What are these mountains called?"

"I do not know that they have any particular designation; but they form part of the chain of the principal range."

"You seem to be pretty well up in the geography of these parts at any rate, and I hope you will not be disappointed; for really, Soltera, this *is* an undertaking, and no mistake about it."

"Yes; and if you read in some newspaper a few months hence, that a lady unknown, together with her mule, have been found at the bottom of a precipice, make up your mind that it is I. Better people can be spared; so any way I will try it. Besides, my late residence in Fiji has given me an insight both as regards tropical and plantation life. I learnt a few things when in those lovely isles of the Pacific which I hope to turn to good account." (A year previously I had been employed as a fin-

ishing governess in a planter's family in one of the islands of the Fijian group. This fact will inform the reader that I add the crime of poverty to my other detriments.)

The foregoing conversation will also explain the conflict anent ways and means which exercised me during my stay at San Francisco, and why the more perilous route chimed in so readily with my purse and proclivities.

Time and the steamer *vid* the Mexican ports of Mazatlan, San Blas, Manzanillo, and Puerto Angel, saw me on my way to the Republic of Honduras, and bound for its port of entry, Amapala.

This latter place is so rarely marked on the smaller maps, that I may mention that this town is situate on a small island in the bay of Fonseca; and that most people revile it as being a hot, dirty, and not money-making place.

Having "been and seen" the stores of the United States of American consul there, and witnessed the traffic which goes on in his well-stocked warehouse, I am much inclined to doubt the latter part of this assertion.

Public opinion, furthermore, appeared to be greatly aggrieved because the nightly lightning which always works with great vigour at Amapala has hitherto left the town intact, and this by a peculiar and persistent perversion of right and wrong. From the manner also in which some persons talked about this coast, I was led to believe that an inevitable lion was to be descried on its shores on the approach of a steamer, watching, it was implied, for the rare meat which, in the shape of a passenger, might descend upon Amapala. This lion also enjoyed the peculiarity of being reported as a "tiger," probably from the circumstance of an acclivity called "La Montana de los Tigres" being close to the landing-place, and whence the creature might have hailed. Before the journey had nearly ended, however, he had subsided (by description) into a mountain-leopard. Bad enough; but I never met him under any of these phases.

Acapulco is the one of the Mexican ports at which we touched on our way down the coast, of which I shall ever retain a "pleasant memory." We arrived in its lovely harbour in

the early morning; and the sight of the picturesque little town, over the red roofs of which the thin veil of the mists was slowly clearing itself away, reminded me of the face of a friend determined to wear a smile. Its situation between two irregular and projecting tongues of land, with the background gradually widening and rising towards the hills, invests it with an air of coziness, and of being, at the same time, thoroughly well protected.

A few trees, dotted about in all the beauty of unprecision, serve to relieve the whole landscape from the appearance of aridity so common to the majority of seaboard towns. Several broken rocks of peculiarly vivid colour jut out like an advanced-guard to the right of a long pier at the entrance, and upon this pier the natives, in full costume or in little costume, stand out in pleasing relief. Add to these the bright-coloured fruit and fish, lying in baskets of every shape and elegant texture, shrouded partially in grand green leaves, which of themselves suggest the idea of sheltering trees. Not overlooking, either, the delicate shell-work held up for sale

in the hands of the loveliest female peasantry in the world; the wonderful flowers; the boats covered with every variety of gay awning, with the Mexican flag at their prow, dancing here and there on the liquid emerald of the sea.

Look with me, reader, in this mirror; you will then have some idea of how appears, in everyday garb, Acapulco.

"How lovely these Mexican girls are!" said the ship's doctor to me as we neared shore,—a party intending to spend a few hours on land whilst the good ship Colima took in cargo, and transacted the business which would detain her in harbour for the rest of the day. "Quite beautiful," continued the doctor, speaking to no one in particular, and keeping his eyes riveted upon a damsel who was waiting on the pier ready to pounce down upon us, and bewitch us into buying some of her shell-work. This was a wreath of stephanotis, most artistically made in small white shells, and as tastefully mounted with green silk leaves. It was a crown for a fairy queen.

The doctor was a very young man—indeed

this was, I think, his first trip as doctor on board a steamer. He had talked during the voyage from San Francisco with much contempt concerning Mexico, the Mexicans, and all their ways and works. In fact he could see nothing admirable but the United States of America, and had repudiated with great energy the imputation often made by the passengers in general, that America is only biding her time to "annex" Mexico to the States.

"Nothing of the kind," he would asseverate; "you are all wrong; the States would not take the country as a gift. A land that requires other people to point out her means of wealth, and invites foreigners to exploit her mines and build her railroads! A lazy, good-for-nothing set of men; and as for the women——"

"Hold hard there, doctor," had retorted a young English engineer, who had embarked at Mazatlan on his way to join a mining-camp somewhere in Guatemala. "I give you the men; but as for the women, nothing short of paradise can beat *them*. I was in Mexico last year, so I think I know something about

it. I repeat, the ladies of Mexico are all lovely."

This opinion was emphatically supported by a party of students fresh from college at San Francisco. These youths, who, in this most cosmopolitan of cities, must have seen many Mexican ladies, were unanimous in backing the engineer's assertion. This gentleman had a smattering of the Spanish language, and thus, with the alliance of the students, his position appeared to be impregnable; but the American doctor stood to his guns.

"Paradise, indeed! what have they to do with the place? They are too lazy to walk in even if the door were opened to them. No brains—no usefulness—can't do a thing but thrum on a guitar. One American girl is worth a hundred of them. And as for beauty, —dirty, brown skins—glaring, beady, black eyes without intelligence. No——"

"May I ask," interrupted the engineer, politely, "*who* is the one American girl worth half a hundred of—well—houris?"

"Angels," suggested one of the students. I

think) he suspected that the engineer's appellation might not be strong enough.

The deep flush on the quiet impassive face of the doctor betrayed that the conversation had taken a turn quite unlooked for by him. Happily at that moment one of the stewards, sent by his chief, came to ask for some quinine pills. So the doctor got himself away, but not before he had heard one of the company assert, —"The Americans certainly have their pretty women, like other nations; but, good Lord! 'them have all of them voices like a peacock.'"

"Surely that is rather a sweeping assertion," I made reply to the passenger who had ventured it.

"Not a bit of it," he answered, with all the hardihood of thorough conviction; "that beautiful thing in woman, 'the soft low voice,' is utterly unknown in America. The children in the schools are taught to pitch their voices in a high key. It is part of their education. One can forgive a little of the peacock in a pretty woman; but when it comes to the plain ones, it makes one shiver whenever they open their mouths."

"I don't know," I replied; "but somehow it does not seem to accord with our doctor's quiet gentle manner to accredit him with a fancy even for a girl with a harsh voice."

"Can't help himself," was the rejoinder; "and I know pretty clearly what I am talking about."

This finished the conversation as far as I was concerned; but I felt sure that the doctor, though out of sight, was near enough to hear these remarks. To prevent the subject coming up again, I asked a young lady of ten years of age to favour us with some music.

That performance had the effect of sending every one at once out of the saloon; and the next morning saw us invading a Mexican port, and admiring the beauty of "las Mejicanas."

In the multiplicity of his occupations by night and day (for there was an apprehension of fever breaking out) our Esculapius had entirely forgotten the guerilla warfare of the preceding evening, or he would not have so enthusiastically exclaimed, "How lovely these Mexican women are!"

Fortunately his opponent had seated himself

in the second boat, and so this involuntary applause fell only on my ear and upon those of the San Franciscan students.

These were quite good-natured fellows, and their "chaff" was perfectly guileless of being personal or bitter. They, however, would have their say.

"Well done, doctor!" cried one who was called Paul by his *confrères*, and who seemed to be their leading spirit; "a confession and retraction all in one. Now look here, doctor: you must buy that wreath; and moreover, you must present it to some lady who is *not* an American. Do you consent?"

"Wa-al, and what then? I will buy the wreath; and further, I can afford to say that I have been mistaken. There is great intelligence in that 'Mejicana's' eye. She is a wonderfully beautiful woman. Ask the price of the wreath and I will buy it, and present it to a lady not American."

True to his promise, the doctor, aided by the lad named Paul (who spoke English very fairly), immediately upon landing began to

traffic with the Mexican girl, she, on her side, being more than willing. Let those whose sole acquaintance with shell-work is confined to the hideous productions exhibited at Brighton, Margate, and others of Britain's coasts, know that on their side of the world never have nor never can be encountered those wonderful productions of sand and glue and buried mussel which constitutes nine-tenths of what is miscalled shell-work in the above-named places.

The shells on the coast of Central America generally are exquisitely delicate, and thin to transparency. At a place called Acajutta, there is a beach so famous for its rose-coloured shells that it is commonly styled the bed of rose-leaves.

The making of these shell-flowers is a prevailing industry along the coast, and the native women, especially the Indians and the Mexicans, derive a great emolument from their sale. The art is also much practised by ladies of higher rank, and it is taught as one of the accomplishments in the convent schools. It is certain that nature gives a liberal helping-hand in the tints of rose and yellow which in these shells

are remarkably natural; but a good deal must be accorded to the delicate touch and elegant taste of those who arrange these charming bouquets.

The wreath being bought, it was not difficult to guess who was to be its recipient. Close beside me stood a young Irish lady, who, with her family, was on her way from Japan to New York *viâ* Aspinwall. The mother having the care of a young infant, had asked me to chaperon "Beauty" and her sister on this little expedition. At this moment I forget the lady's Christian name. She was called Beauty O'H—— all over the ship; and she deserved the appellation, being a simple innocent girl, charming in every way.

Three cheers from the lads, interlarded with the complimentary expressions of "Good comrade — man of good heart — of honour," &c., notified the extreme satisfaction of the students at this assignment of the purchase; whilst the sapphire blue eyes of the girl beamed with gratitude as she warmly tendered her thanks. The doctor really at that moment did receive

the reward of virtue—that is, if virtue ever does get any reward outside of tracts and little books.

A fellow-passenger, who rejoiced in the name of Cookes, here remarked that he liked sentiment and all that sort of thing in its place. He had come to Acapulco to see the peak of distant Popocatepetl, "that splendid mountain, madam," he continued, particularly addressing himself to me, "which has his head covered with clouds all the year round, and which——"

Here interposed Señor Hernandez, a gentle well-bred Spaniard, who might pass for being perfectly sane, did he not acknowledge to the ambition of becoming at no distant date president of one of the Central American republics. The Señor's knowledge of English was limited, but he had caught enough to understand that Popocatepetl was being misrepresented. "Pardon me, his head is not always in the clouds," said he, taking up Mr Cookes; "and if we want to see him in all his glory we must walk a short way into the country. In such splendid weather, I think we should be able to count upon a very clear view."

"Do you know the way?" inquired Mr Cookes, who spoke the Castilian language remarkably well.

"I was here many years ago, but I think I can remember the route; there is no time to lose. Remember our captain's words as we left: 'If you do not return by five o'clock I shall not wait, but sail away.'"

This admonition put us on our mettle, and taking the middle of the road, we set out on our expedition. The streets of Acapulco as they recede from the shore are hilly, and full of sand and large holes. An attempt has formerly been made to repair them here and there, but the result is not a success. Some of the houses are very solidly built, with stone pillars supporting the porticoes, and with broad stone seats, firmly built in the wall, within these. Apparently there was not a glass window in the place, all these apertures being filled with light lattice-work, painted a dull red colour. In some casements thin bars of iron, placed diagonally, admitted air and light.

The public school window was so furnished,

and a thick shutter hung outside, which could be closed at pleasure, according to the strength of the sun and glare. The schoolroom seemed to be very roomy and clean, and its walls were evidently of great thickness. We looked through the iron lattice, and saw the scholars busy at work. The master came forward and bowed, and at a sign from him all the pupils who were seated rose to their feet. This, from all appearance, did not seem to be the first time that the school had been noticed by strangers. A few little fellows poked their heads through the lower bars; and some big ones, who had got into the street, followed us for a short distance as we wended on our way. They soon turned back, and sped away to school again with the speed of deer. Somebody was awaiting them!

CHAPTER II.

FORWARD being the word, we quickly cleared the town of Acapulco. Its outskirts bear a cultivated appearance, owing to the rows of trees which are planted for some distance at the side of the footpath. At this season they bore a bunchy mauve-coloured flower, something between the lilac and the beautiful climber Wistaria; but the blossom was not so clearly defined, and it crumbled away in the hand at the slightest touch.

It was pleasant to find the China rose (with such a lovely pink on its cheek!) peeping out here and there from a dilapidated hedge. This place must surely be some deserted garden. A look through a gap confirmed this conjecture, as we descried several tall hollyhock-looking plants, bearing about them a decided air of

culture. They appeared as if they were on guard, distracting by their gaudy array the attention of the passers-by from the desolation within.

A party endowed with plenty of life and *tongue* generally travels quickly, and gets over a good span of ground and time at almost imperceptible speed. This was certainly the case with us as on and on we went, admiring the fantastic peaks and heights by which the near distance was intersected, and grumbling a little when the ascent became more abrupt, and the road rougher. Very shortly granite rocks, and their usual companion the dwarf cactus, stood out upon the scene; the huts, too, had become more sparse; these were little else than bare poles, with their roofing composed of dirty skins and palm-leaves. Then utter desolation: for nothing living, save a large hare, which darted into some brushwood in the background, gave evidence that any created thing existed here.

My surprise was great when I heard this animal declared to be a hare. "It is so large and black," objected I.

"Years ago, when I landed from a merchant vessel here for a day, this place was overrun by hares. I remember we made a party to go into the interior and shoot them. They were mostly large, and the flesh was very coarse," made answer Mr Cookes.

"You have been here before?" inquired Beauty O'H——.

"I have been almost all over Mexico and the coast," returned Mr Cookes; "but I was only on shore at Acapulco for the one day I allude to, and that was twenty years ago."

"This is how you come to speak Spanish so well," said the same young lady.

"Yes; I kept it up in Mexico; but I learned the language in Spain, in the old country. When very young I was sent into a counting-house at Cadiz; but I soon tired of that, and turned sailor."

"You know all about Popocatepetl then?" continued Beauty.

"No; I don't feel interested in mountains; I have seen such a lot of them. This one is the

highest in America, they say; but it is only, after all, a volcano out of work."

"Doctor," said she, turning round, and speaking to him with an air of confidence; "you know something about this mountain. Why is it thought so much of, and where did it get its frightful name?"

"It got its frightful name in very far off times," replied that gentleman; "I cannot tell you when, but it was so called when the Spaniards invaded Mexico, and conquered that country. The meaning of Popocatepetl is 'The hill that smokes.'"

"It does not smoke now?"

"No; but at the time of the invasion I allude to, it was in full play; and the eruption was so terrific, and lasted so long, that the Indians believed it to be the portent of the destruction of their city. You should read 'The Conquest of Mexico,' by Prescott. You will learn all about it far better in that work than from me."

"Prescott is an American?"

"Yes," returned the doctor, proudly; "and his writings are accepted as being standard

works in all the civilised world. If you prefer to select an English author on the subject, read Robertson."

"Certainly not," replied the girl hastily; "you Americans are so touchy. I only inquired what Prescott's nationality was, to satisfy my own ignorance."

"Come up here, all of you," shouted a voice from the front—the owner being perched on an elevated ridge a little to the right, and taking advantage of the height to look down upon us with the air of a discoverer. This was the student Paul.

We hastened to obey. The other students helped up the girls, the Spaniard helped me, and I hauled Mr Cookes, who was lame, with my disengaged hand, the doctor propelling him in the rear.

Hats off, shouting, and an improvised war-dance on the part of the students, announced us to be in the presence of Popocatepetl, that is, as far as eyesight was concerned. Actually it was many, many leagues away in the far distance.

In the far distance—true; but well did we discern this magnificent peak, shooting like a monolith straight and fair into the clouds. Was his form irregular; had he gaping wounds, black with cinder and burn, and disfigured by smoke? The rich soft mantle of snow veiled all these; and troops of smaller cones far and wide, more sober in their greyer tones, clustered around him to conceal his scars and his power for evil. From the point whence we viewed him, he was the giant grand and beautiful, and we ignored the destructions which he had wrought.

"Let him not arouse," pray we; for should His hand unloose him, who can tell what miseries the pent-up fires of a century may rain on the earth?

Some longing, lingering looks, and we descend into the road which will take us back to the town! Our tongues are free, for the weird solemn scene had subdued the youngest of us into silence.

Now we all burst forth into praise, and admire ourselves intensely for undertaking this pilgrimage. Ere long it leaks out that some of us are

tired, and all confess to feeling very hungry and thirsty.

Good Señor Hernandez is equal to this occasion.

"I have an old friend," said he, "whose *hacienda* is very near the town,—it will not be many steps out of the way. If he does not happen to be at home, some of the family will be. They are kind, hospitable people, and will make us welcome."

"But we are such a gang," one of our number reminded Señor Hernandez.

"Never mind; there is plenty of room, and my friend is a Spaniard of pure race." This last expression meant many things; amongst which the declaration of there being no admixture of Indian blood in the composition of Señor Hernandez's friend was one; another, that a true Spaniard never quarrels with the number of his guests.

So we hied to the *hacienda* of Señor Don Candido, and were admitted through a broken gate into a piece of ground, half coffee plantation, half garden, and whole wilderness,—

brilliant flowers dotting themselves here and there, mostly set on tall stalks. They reminded me somewhat of some pert damsels I have seen, who were determined not to be overlooked.

A long low building stood in the centre of this enclosure; and presently there poured out from this men, women, dogs, unlimited in number as they appeared, followed by a very handsome lad who carried a gun in his hand. Introductions over, we were soon seated in the broad verandah—which is generally the place of social gatherings in these Spanish houses. Some handsomely netted hammocks and some plain grass ones were slung between the several posts of the verandah. Out of one of these a head was raised up, and as quickly popped back again.

"It is only Pepita," said the lady of the house, in explanation. "Poor Pepita! she runs about too much. Sleep on," she continued, addressing the bulge in the hammock; "these good friends will excuse thee." And she gave the hammock a swing, which, I suppose, sent Pepita off to the land of Nod, but which effec-

tually roused a cross parrot which had been reposing with its mistress, and which flew out of its enclosure, and without the slightest provocation made straight for me and attempted to bite my feet. Failing in this, the bird clung to my skirts, and attempted to climb upon me beneath them. I tried to push the creature away, but it seemed bent upon tasting European flesh; and as the O'H—— girls were afraid to touch it, I had to rise to my feet and hurl it from me. Just then the handsome lad—who was called, I heard, Jaime (this is pronounced Ha-ee-may, and is Castilian for our ugly, abrupt James)—caught sight of what was going on, and proceeded to put a stop to the parrot's annoyance, for it was rushing at me again.

Don Jaime left the verandah-post against which he had been leaning as he chatted to Señor Hernandez, and brought out from some corner a long and very thin bamboo switch. With this he administered four or five cuts sharply across the back and wings of the bird, reproving it as he did so just as if it had been a child under correction.

"Ah, naughty Marquita! Take thy whipping; this is to teach thee manners. Wicked bird! How dare you try to bite!"

I had never seen a bird whipped before; and fearing that he might do it a mischief, I begged the lad to refrain.

"She must be tamed," replied the lad, as he desisted at once; "she is of a very strong kind, and her temper is that of the *demonio*. No, I would not hurt her; I know how much to correct her."

All this time the bird was yelling and squeaking like a veritable *demonio*, and flew to the roof of the verandah, describing wide circles about Don Jaime's head, and making as if she would attack him with all the strength of her will. The bamboo switch was evidently a factor in the case; and at length she flew up into a corner and contented herself with emitting now and then some peculiar sounds, which possibly might be hard bird-swearing.

The party at the other end of the verandah talked calmly on, and never appeared even to notice the hubbub which this had occasioned.

I suppose in these parts it is not the correct thing to expend unnecessary strength upon being surprised.

Some excellent coffee and fruit were handed to us, and at the same time cigars were offered to all who would accept them. The lady of the house presented her own to me, first lighting it and giving it two or three puffs at her mouth as she did so. This is the most complimentary manner of presenting a cigar, and I felt sorry that natural and national prejudices obliged me to decline the civility. The hostess soon found a grateful recipient in one of our fellow-travellers, and then she and her daughters smoked away as hard as any three London cabmen.

The Misses O'H—— proposed to stroll out into the garden, and the handsome Jaime put down his coffee-cup and attended us. He plucked some fine China roses, and placing these against a background of coffee-tree stems laden with berries, produced three beautiful and unique bouquets. This young gentleman told us that he was a nephew of the owner of

the house, and that he was paying a visit at this time to Acapulco. We were all very much taken with the appearance of the youth, and his kind unaffected manner was truly charming.

"What a lout the ordinary British youth of the same age would be in this position!" said the eldest Miss O'H—— to me, as we walked behind the others. "He would be wishing all of us in Japan, and suffer the extreme of misery in his own mind."

"True," I answered; "but remember, when the ordinary British lad arrives at maturity, he generally remains in the plenitude of strength and manhood for many years. When Lubin is fifty, Antonio will be looking, and probably feeling, sixty-five. The Spanish women, you know, are considered to be old at thirty; but they are formed and lovely at fifteen."

"I do not understand why this should be," continued my young friend.

"Nor I either. I suppose it is in some degree a fulfilment of the doctrine of compensation."

"Ah! that is my father's favourite theory, don't you know?"

"No, dear Hibernia, I did not know; but I agree with your father. I confess to being a great believer in the doctrine of compensation."

"Have you had any compensation in your life for your early troubles? None of us have, and papa has been done out of a lot of money," said the girl.

"So have I also; but compensation may not come in the way we expect. Good health, happiness, getting married, my dear, on your part, and not getting married on mine, may perhaps be a compensation for the loss of money."

So preached I; and the kind-hearted girl pressed my arm, and said she only wished that I had a large fortune, and that I could finish my journey with her and her family. This could not be, for the O'H——'s were on their way to New York.

Now were gathered together our forces, for we must be back on our way to the vessel. The doctor was missing. Somebody surmised that he had already returned to the ship. However, we unanimously decided that he would turn up somewhere; and then we all took leave,

having well enjoyed our simple and cordial entertainment.

"Ah! there you are, doctor; we could not think what had become of you," exclaimed Mr Cookes, as he caught sight of that gentleman sitting on a step busy overhauling the contents of a candle-box-looking article. "We thought you had turned back for metal more attractive—the Mexican shell-worker."

"You thought wrong, then. I strayed out of the way to look for some marine plants, for I aspire to be a little of a botanist. Not having the faintest idea where you had got to, I walked straight here; for you would be obliged to pass this place to get to the pier."

"This place" was a large and well-stocked store, hung without and within with a wonderful collection of articles, and kept by a veritable Englishman. I wanted some large white handkerchiefs wherewith to cover my shoulders during my proposed ride, as the back of the neck, at the juncture of the head with the spine, is the part which should be more carefully covered even than the head itself under a burning sun.

The girls, too, wanted the gayest handkerchiefs they could find, to remind them of Mexico when they arrived at home.

We were supplied with what we required at a terrific price. The shopkeeper must have netted forty per cent on an average upon our purchases.

"We pay very high for the privilege of dealing with a countryman," remarked Mr Cookes. "The French, Greeks, and Spaniards certainly do bleed foreigners pretty freely, but it is reserved to the English all over the world to overcharge and swindle those of their own nation. Other peoples are considerate to their own, but we are above the weakness of making any exception."

"Really?"

"That is my experience in these countries. Depend upon it, the worst people to be encountered in any part of the world are the low whites," went on Mr Cookes. "They get all they can out of the natives, and then, in some cases, go home and cant about the wickedness of the heathen."

This is in a measure true, as I knew by experience in the Fiji Islands, and from statements of friends on whom I could rely.

Returning in the boat to the vessel, I found myself again seated near the doctor. He asked me to spare him a stem of the coffee-berries.

"I want them," said he, with a little hesitation, "for a 'school marm.' She is a good girl, and, though an American, she *has* the low soft voice so beautiful in woman." Here the doctor looked very valiant, as if he would not recede an inch from what he had averred.

I handed him the stem of coffee-berries, and with it the finest of my roses. "The 'school marm' will be the doctor's wife some fine day, I predict," said I, shaking him by the hand. "Now, do you dry that rose, and some far-off time you may chance upon it, and remember our little excursion in Acapulco."

The good gentleman returned the pressure of my hand, and merely replied, "Yes; this has been a red-letter day."

"May all go well with you. Good-bye."

The boat had touched the ship's stair, and

the doctor, after placing me on the lower step, ran rapidly up on deck. Thus vanished out of my sight, probably for ever, one of my pleasant travelling friends.

The captain was standing on board as we ascended. "I have not had time to say much to you," said he, addressing me; "but I hear you are going to the Honduras. Surely it is a terrible journey for you to take alone!"

"I do not fear a little hardship," said I, perhaps too confidently. "I am the daughter and sister of English soldiers, and my bringing up has never been luxurious. Circumstances in later years have compelled me to depend on myself."

"It is a wonder to me," continued the captain, "that your relatives allow you to go."

"I have no near relations, and I go to make a home of my own. We have all of us our troubles, captain; do not discourage me. Hitherto I have got on very well, and the world in general is kind to lone female travellers."

"Yes, the civilised world." The captain here shook his head.

I turned aside to answer a summons. The speaker was a bedroom steward. "Mr Smith sends me to ask you to get together your things, please, for the boat will be ready in twenty minutes to take you on board the Clyde."

I looked at my roses and my beautiful bunch of coffee-berries, and handed them silently over to the youngest Miss O'H——; for—the truth must out—I was to say good-bye, and leave these friends of a few days "for ever and a day," as the saying goes. Yes; there stood the vessel alongside of the Colima, the steamer which we had seen in the harbour before we went ashore. She was called the Clyde, was smaller than the Colima, and warranted slow.

This vessel had been all day taking in and discharging cargo, and now was ready to receive the last of the passengers of the Colima who might be bound to the intermediate ports. The future mission of the Colima was to dash down to Panama without a stoppage; whilst the Clyde was to dawdle leisurely along the coast, stop at every port, and to cast anchor every night from sundown to sunrise.

"Why is this?" I inquired of Mr Smith, the head steward,—that kindest and most courteous of head stewards, wherever the others may be.

"The navigation is particularly dangerous along that coast, and in some places the water is very shallow and abounds in shoals. The steamers always lay-to at night. The voyage down there will be very tedious, and the heat terrible, you'll find," returned Mr Smith. "Do not be startled at the lightning. It is very alarming to a stranger, but you will soon be accustomed to that. This is the season for it."

"We have had a pretty fair share since we left San Francisco. Will it be worse as we go further south?" I inquired.

"No; but you will think more of it, as you will be lying still, and the steamer also. I mention the subject, to assure you that I have never heard of any vessel being struck; and although moving objects, they say, run less risk, the lightning on this coast seems to respect vessels at anchor."

"Are any more of our passengers changing for the Clyde?" I inquired.

"One steerage passenger,—a gentleman in every sense of the word. He goes only as far as La Union, but he is willing to be useful to you if he can. I am sorry to say that terrible 'lady,' Mrs C., and her children, will be your only companions. I transferred them to the other ship three hours ago, and they have been shrieking ever since. By the way," continued Mr Smith, with his good-natured laugh, "the captain of the Clyde is in a terrible fright as to what you may be like, as these C.'s are the only specimens he has of the Colima's passengers, and Mrs C. talks of her friend the English lady!"

I had only spoken to this individual once. She was a demi-semi-gentlewoman, and her manners and appearance were very unfortunate. Her hardness to one of her children, and the brazen way in which she had informed the passengers in general that she had come away in debt, and evaded her tradespeople in San Francisco, had caused us to dislike her thoroughly.

We found that her husband was captain of

a mine somewhere on the coast of Guatemala, and that she and her family were on the way to join him. According to her own account, she had left San Francisco in disguise; but from various discrepancies in her narrations, I was led to think that she preferred being taken for a vagabond than to pass as one of whom there was nothing particular to be said.

Here they are, the boat and Mr Smith waiting to transfer me to the Clyde. He brings in his hand a glass of champagne, which is sent, he says, "with the Colima's compliments." The O'H——'s and students say good-bye with all the kindliness of their nature; and gentle, unassuming Señor Hernandez tells me not to keep him waiting, for he is coming on board with me to introduce me to the captain. And so I get away, with a benison in my heart on these kindly strangers. This was all my adieu, for I could not speak. *El buen Dios los guarde muchos años!* (May God grant them many years!)

CHAPTER III.

THE steerage passenger described by the head steward as being a thorough gentleman was already seated in the boat which was to convey us on board the Clyde. I saw at a glance that he was one of Britannia's sons, very poor, perhaps, but bearing withal that unmistakable air of "breed," which neither wealth, nor education even, has ever succeeded in imitating with success. The true stamp of nature's gentleman, the best of all, is ever inborn. This fellow-wanderer assisted us to seats, and then we exchanged a few words as we were being rowed to our new vessel. I gathered from these that this passenger was bound for the mines in Guatemala; and he added to this information an avowal of his determination never to set foot in England

until he should return rich, or at least independent.

"I am going to work as a common miner," continued this young man, with great decision, "whether my family like it or not. They sent me off to make my way as best I could in the colonies; and because I could not get a situation as a clerk in an office the moment I landed, it is assumed that I am idle and all the rest of it; and so I am going to take my own way of it, and stick to the work that has been offered to me on this side."

Mr Smith, who sat opposite, listened to all this, and then said: "You came from Sydney, sir, did you not?"

"Yes; I worked my passage to 'Frisco, and am now on my way to join a mining camp."

From what transpired further, I found that this young man was but one of the many who suffer from the extraordinary delusions under which many *patres familiarum*, uncles, and widowed mothers of our nation labour with regard to the demand and supply of educated labour in the colonies. Generally speaking,

when a young gentleman betrays, or has betrayed, a proclivity for spending too much money, or cannot get what is called *genteel* employment at home, or has perhaps committed himself in an act of grave misdoing, there is always some fool at hand to suggest his being sent out to the colonies. If he may consent to enter farm or domestic service, to learn a trade, or undertake any manual labour —well, let him go. "But no," says *paterfamilias;* "Dick has had a good education, he must go out as a gentleman. What he has learned in the office here will suffice to place him at once; and Crammer, the emigration agent, assures me that young men are sure to be provided for at once in the colonies." And so, with perhaps one respectable introduction, and much oftener without any, young hopeful or hopeless is sent on his way. He perhaps makes some inquiries on his journey, and falls in generally with those who note only the successes.

"Look how well have succeeded MacWuskey and O'Scamp! and they landed in the colony without a pound, sir!"

Very true of forty years agone; but now are changed days, and the field, in the older towns at least, is full; besides, the sons of the colonists must have their innings.

Thus it is, that when Dick and Tom Clerk, London, first arrive in Sydney, for instance, they walk, poor fellows, day after day, from office to wharf, and from wharf to store counting-house, seeking work in all honesty, and finding none. In some instances they get promises, but in general they are recommended to betake themselves to the bush; and in some few cases they are roughly repelled, and requested not to bother. Desperation, as they find their small means diminishing, leads them to invade the offices of the governor, the inspector of police, and the immigration agent. Each and every one of these would do his best to help, but he has already a list of applicants as long as his arm. The answer to inquiries for employment is invariably the same. "You must wait. I will try and help you, if you can stay for a month or so; if not, I advise you to go into the bush as soon as you can."

There it is; Clerk, London, cannot wait. He was sent out with a very small sum, and most of this is already spent for everyday wants. He would go into the bush now, but he cannot command the railway fare.

In nine cases out of ten, the family of the clerk has never supplied one shilling to enable him to exist until work is found. So deeply rooted is the idea that a man can get into a merchant's office (this is the favourite vision) the moment almost that he lands in Australia, that provision for a month in advance is seldom thought of. And so the family feel very aggrieved when they get the intelligence that Dick is hauling coals on a wharf, and that Tom is driving cattle at Tumberumba.

Ah! how often comes the news that the one is dying in hospital, dependent upon the benevolence of a citizen and a sister of mercy; and that the other, not finding employment, has disappeared, no one knows whither!

Our boat is dancing attendance now, for we have to wait till a *barca* from the shore, unlading fruit, sheers aside. This conversation

is Greek to Señor Hernandez, but he smiles good-naturedly, and tells the young man that a great deal can be done in mines. This much the Señor has gathered.

Mr Smith here asked if the mounted police of Sydney were not a very efficient body of men?

"Very," I replied; "the force is chiefly constituted of young men who have originally emigrated with the intention of filling very different positions. They are well off, for the inspector of police takes great interest in those who buckle cheerfully to their work, and he always employs a fit man when he can. The mounted police, however, has its limits, and cannot be regarded as a refuge for the destitute. I strongly advise every man who emigrates to the colonies to learn a trade, or follow some manual labour. Clerks and school teachers abound there *ad nauseam*, and it is neither wise nor honest to advise one to add to the number."

"You are quite right," answered the steerage passenger. "I suppose you have had some experience in the matter?"

"The sad experience of being applied to by more than one gentleman's son to lend him a few shillings wherewith to purchase a meal."

"This must be very often the result of their own imprudence," said Mr Smith.

"In some cases, unfortunately; but bad management and ignorance on the part of people at home have a good deal to do with it. If the lad is not to be trusted with money, why cannot parents or guardians send it out to some bank or responsible person? This, I am told, has been urged both publicly and privately. You know as well as I do that banishment to the colonies has been a favourite remedy for ne'er-do-weels at home. Happily the colonies will no longer put up with our scapegraces and incapables; but work cannot, at first, be got for even the most deserving."

Space is now made for us, and we clamber up the iron steps of the Clyde. Mr Smith has something to say to his *confrère* in that vessel. I hear later on that it is an injunction to take care of me. A Chinaman comes to tell me that my baggage is in the cabin

No. 2, which I am to occupy alone. This last news is very pleasant, and I am comforted also when I see that No. 2 is a deck cabin, and that the berth is furnished with white curtains. This will enable me to keep the door open during the night. Mrs C. and her children are to occupy No. 1, so there will be just companionship enough without too near proximity.

The sunset is over, and Señor Hernandez and I sit on a bench and watch the lightning. It has become quite a familiar object now; and we both admire this wonderful feature of the nights on this coast with deep interest. We talk about Old Spain, I remember, and my good friend is delighted to find that I am the daughter of an officer who fought for that country in the last Peninsular war. Now Mr Smith comes to say good-bye, and to carry away this kindly gentleman. The parting is quickly over, and I plunge into my cabin and become "Soltera" once more.

Four o'clock A.M. is the correct hour for rising at sea in Central America. After a

night of great heat, I had just fallen asleep as the vessel moved out of port; ten minutes afterwards I was roused by a succession of shrieks. The cause proved to be Mrs C. correcting one of her children with a box-strap; and so my intention of remaining in my berth was completely frustrated, as far as sleep was concerned, for, to drown the child's yells, the elder sister had commenced a series of dismal tunes on an accordion. Sam the Chinaman, who had brought me a cup of tea, was dreadfully scandalised.

"Very bad lot," remarked the Celestial, as he handed in my tea through the window which looked out on to the deck. "Ole gentlemans other side, he swear awful at the noise, and me don't wonder. Ay! wait till captain come on deck, he soon see. Come again soon." This last promise was in reference to bringing me more tea, I suppose; for my friend had shot away like an arrow at the sound of a voice which was inquiring for that "heathen Sam" in anything but dulcet tones.

There were few passengers present at the usual hour of breakfast, and of these I alone represented womankind. What were called *gentlemen* were anything but attractive specimens of their order. They all ate and drank in silence, fed with their knives, and never had the civility to pass a single thing on the table to me. They certainly knew what was the business of the table-steward, and, I conclude, did not care to interfere with it. The captain, of whom I had heard most favourable report, was ill, and confined to his cabin.

Here was one of the varieties of travel with a vengeance; but we cannot have everything *couleur de rose;* and as no company is better than uncongenial company, I tucked myself into a shady corner on deck, nursed the purser's cat, and read Jules Verne's 'Twenty Leagues under the Sea.' If anything distracted my attention, it was the remembrance of the Colima and her seafarers: but the copy-book slips of my early days impressed upon me that comparisons are odious; and so I tried very hard to put everything but the present

out of my mind, and in a sort of way I managed to succeed.

A day and a night certified each other with regular monotony, the heat becoming more intense. At length we made Port Angel. The port presents a fine bold coast, but it bears the reputation of being extremely unhealthy. An enormous old lady of colour got in here: it was quite a work of mechanism to get her hoisted up the side. This was the first and last I ever saw of her, as she went straight to her cabin, and remained there till I disembarked at Amapala. She was accompanied by a nephew, who seemed to be very nervous and shy; so these were no great acquisition.

A laughable mistake had caused me to be sick and qualmish on this day. Mrs C., who treated me very civilly, asked me to divide a bottle of congress-water with her, both of us looking upon it as a kind of effervescent, such as lemonade or soda-water.

The Chinaman who had brought it up of course made no explanation. Mrs C. divided the contents of the bottle into two glasses, and

we both drank off a good portion of the most abominable decoction I ever tasted, at a gulp. Simultaneously, we put down the glasses, and glared at each other.

"What have you given me?" I at last gasped out.

"It's poison! I am sure it's poison!" shrieked Mrs C. "Sam,—Chinese fool, come to me this minute! You have brought poison here!"

Sam was not within hail; but one of the hitherto dumb male passengers was passing, and he was startled into opening his lips.

"Why—you have not been drinking this to quench your thirst, have you?" said he, as he took up a glass.

"Yes; we thought it was a cooling drink."

The man could not restrain a laugh. Who could? This beverage was a strong medicine —diluted Epsom salts, and something more— and ranked among the ship's remedies for bilious attacks and other ailments. We had taken enough for four people, and we naturally must expect to feel the effects of the medicine severely.

"If you had wanted to ward off fever,

you could not have managed it more effectually," continued our interlocutor. "Let me advise you to eat something substantial, and avoid tea and soups for a day or two." So saying he turned on his heel, and we had the satisfaction of hearing him laugh like a fiend as he went down to the saloon.

Mrs C. hurled the congress-water bottle into the sea, and sent for some brandy. We took about a teaspoonful apiece, and were not, after all, made very ill. Possibly the dose was good for us; but we both, I think, will "squirm" to the end of our lives at the mention of congress-water.

The next day being the "glorious Fourth of July," some recognition of the event must take place. Early in the morning, the C. girls' awful accordion was in full play, the purser following suit upon another, till we were nearly all made wild with the noise; for the music had been supplemented by a fire of crackers, and human yells were added to these.

Happily the captain, though an American, did not appreciate this manner of celebrating

the national glorification day. He was possessed of great taste and refinement, and he would do a thing well, or leave it alone; so these rejoicings were put an end to, and a very good dinner was served in the saloon in honour of the day. Captain C. was a remarkably handsome and agreeable man; and I always look back upon him as being my model American. Of course there are many such, but I have not, hitherto, been fortunate enough to meet them.

Three days passed wearily away, as the heat in the day had become most oppressive: it was a dull, sickly kind of heat, which seemed to permeate through the system and absorb all strength. The sea-air, and a violent thunderstorm which took place one night, kept us alive.

We stopped at one or two ports; passengers coming and going by units, and twos and threes, as the case might be. The C. children became so unmanageable as the days went by, that I really could not help feeling some compassion for the mother. To keep these rioters a little quiet, the officers of the ship supplied them

with oranges, nuts, and other fruit, in unlimited quantity. The heaps of peel, skins, and other *débris* at our cabin-doors testified to the justice done to these refreshments, and Sam the China-man had to come and sweep "twice a-day," as if he were cleaning up after a herd of swine. This extra office, it may be supposed, did not tend to increase his admiration for the family.

It was a great incident in our career when we reached a small port, the name of which is not in my journal, to see a boat come off shore, bringing towards us two passengers, some bales, and a heap of cocoa-nuts. These last were the special attraction, for nothing quenches the thirst more quickly than the water which is contained in the cocoa-nut before it turns to milk and kernel. The ship's store of cocoa-nuts was ex-hausted; and we were not only thankful to see a new supply, but hugged ourselves in the opinion that they might be fresh.

An unlocking of the door of an unoccupied cabin on the other side of mine announced that we were going to have a new neighbour. Sam informed us that a gentleman was going to

occupy it who was sick, "very muchee sick. He waitee in boat now—got own servant; he waitee for more mans pull him up side."

Mrs C. became violently excited at this piece of news. "Very ill, is he?" exclaimed she. "Speak the truth, Sam, he has got the fever—you know he has. Don't contradict me; it *can* be nothing else than fever."

"No, not anything like that, missee," returned the patient Celestial. "Him have fever? No, no; captain know better; captain no let fever in here, eh!"

There was some reason in this; and though Mrs C. had replied, "Then it will turn to fever," my fears were instantly allayed. I remembered how strict were all precautions taken on board against even a suspicion of "El Vomito," as is called the terrible yellow fever of these coasts. A family of five children, however, fully justified Mrs C.'s alarm.

Presently a scuffling and shuffling of feet approached our quarters, and on standing aside we gave place to an exceedingly large stout gentleman who was leaning on the arm of his

servant. Behind these came a sailor with a portmanteau and a canvas sack, tied in the middle like a mail-bag, *minus* its seal. Sam darted to the front in order to show the cabin.

The gentleman was a Briton without a doubt. He was dressed in a suit of white linen, and a long pugaree dangled from his green hat. His face was ghastly pale, and his head was laid on his servant's shoulder. He evidently was suffering greatly, and appeared to be almost insensible. As I looked at him it occurred to me that he might have had a sunstroke.

The servant got his master into his cabin, and presently one of the ship's officers came to assist in getting this stout gentleman into his berth. The servant, who was a *ladino* (mixture of Spanish and Indian), was but a lad, of at most seventeen years, and must have been quite unable to deal single-handed with so inert a load.

During dinner Captain C. told me something about this new passenger. "He is travelling," said he, "for a firm at New York, and, like

most men down here, he is looking after mines."

"He seems to be very ill," I said.

"Oh, that will pass off during the night. He is merely suffering from giddiness from exposure to the sun, and from getting into an awful rage to boot. Just fancy! he stood in the boiling heat for about two hours disputing a charge on his baggage! The custom-house officer came on board with him to explain how he appears to be so ill. It's a mercy that he escaped a sunstroke. Will you take some curry? It is very good."

I got the curry, and the captain went on. "And only about two pesetas" (less than two shillings)! "This is just like the usual run of Englishmen; they will bear an overcharge of pounds with fair equanimity, but when the matter is one of sixpence, they swear and tear till they have scarcely a breath left!"

"Two pesetas seem hardly worth while to dispute about," said I.

"The principle of the thing is always the reason given when the sum is a trifle; and it is so,

but it is lost labour to rave at these people ; they do not understand, as a rule, one quarter of what is said to them. I have seen men stand whilst a foreigner, an opponent, is telling them, in the strongest of mixed idioms, that they are fools and villains,—quietly stand, with a half-pitying smile on their faces, as if they were disputing with a child, and must make allowance."

"But if they don't understand ?"

"It would be much the same if they did. They know well enough that they are being abused, and bow and flourish between the lulls in the conversation in the calmest manner. That is so aggravating to the English and Americans ! These take it as meant for impertinence ; I, who have had experience, know that it results from pure indifference and the languor induced by the climate."

"I have been told that these Central Americans stick very closely to the point where money is concerned," said I.

"That they do. Our friend up-stairs had, after all, to pay the two pesetas, or leave his baggage behind. And so, what with the excite-

ment and exposure, he nearly succeeded in bringing on a fit. However, the physicking he has had will set him up all right by to-morrow."

This was cheering news, and Mrs C. retired to rest with a peaceful mind.

On the morrow the stranger was reclining in a bamboo-cane chair beneath the awning. He did not look quite well, but his appearance was certainly more comfortable than that presented on the preceding day.

I bade him good morning and inquired after his health. Mr Z.'s fine grey eyes lighted up as I addressed him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I could not be mistaken; I was sure that you were an Englishwoman!"

I confirmed his opinion.

"You are not belonging to that woman and those horrible children?" he continued, speaking with much disgust, and indicating the C. party with his thumb.

"No; I am only acquainted with them by the accident of travel."

"Excuse me, I am a plain man; what on

earth brings a lady such as you in this part of the world?"

I told him, as briefly as I could, what my position was. He snorted and grunted, and finally said—

"I hope you won't get murdered. By the by, San Pedro Sula, that is not a bad place when you get to it; I should very much like to go there myself, but the travelling——"

The *ladino* boy, with a polite "Con permiso," stated that he had been at San Pedro Sula. It was "a beautiful place," he said.

"He was there," continued the master, "helping to build that confounded railway. There's a mess! A lot of rascals in London set that floating. It ought to have paid; yes, paid well; but in these places there is no one to look after things, and the whites are quite as ready to swindle one another when there is nothing to be got out of foreigners. Would you believe it, ma'am," continued the poor gentleman, "that a wretched Scotchman, one of my own countrymen, actually upheld the custom-house clerk, through thick and thin, in the matter of

an overcharge which was made on my baggage!"

I expressed my regret to hear this, but ventured the observation that perhaps the Scotchman thought that the official was right.

"Nothing of the kind," replied my friend with great energy; "he only wanted to curry favour and stick to his berth. Fancy their having the audacity to charge me wharfage dues for that bag of cocoa-nuts there!" continued Mr Z., warming with his subject; "a few cocoa-nuts that I had bought and sent down the night before only! The thing is monstrous! I could have done without the fruit, as I am going to La Libertad only; but they threatened to detain my portmanteau if I did not pay all the dues. So I was obliged to pay two pesetas, as I had not time to waste. They got a bit of my mind, though!"

Here we both laughed; and as Mr Z. was in the main a good-natured person, his wrath quickly evaporated in the safety-valve, which I, as an unprejudiced listener, seemed to represent.

"La Libertad is the next port that we stop at," I say, in order to ward off any further reference to this gentleman's annoyances.

"Yes; I get off there, as I have to go up into the interior on business. You will have a terrible time of it going across to San Pedro. I have often thought of going there; but from what I have heard about the roads, and the starvation, and the chances of attack (chances, mind, I say—for I don't want to frighten you, but there is nothing really to eat), and other discomforts, I have decided to give up the idea. I should like, however, to accompany you," he added, after a short pause.

"Why not?" say I, catching at the opportunity of securing a travelling companion. "You and your servant and mules joined with mine (for I am to hire a lad and muleteer at Amapala), would make quite a respectable company. We should protect the one the other, if needs be. I have little fear, and surely there must be something to be got to eat. How do the people live themselves?"

"A plantain and a cigarillo is all they re-

quire," replied Mr Z. "You will suffer very much from want of food. Take what you can with you. For myself, I could not do without my dinner more than twice a-week. I have always been accustomed to live well. No, no—at my time of life it would not do. Glad the consul at Amapala will look after you. Have you got a revolver?"

"A revolver! No. I never fired one in my life," I replied in terror. "I would much rather be without one."

"Wait a moment," replied Mr Z. He rose and went into his cabin, returning with a mahogany case. He opened this, and displayed reposing therein two revolvers,—one a large weapon, the other some sizes smaller.

"This is the jewellery I travel with," he continued; "but the smaller revolver is of no use to me. I bought this, intending it for a wedding present to a girl in the interior; but the poor thing died suddenly, and so I have a revolver to spare. This is for you," he said, putting it into my hand.

I thanked him for his kindness, but I put it

back, saying that I could never make up my mind to fire it.

"Do you think," he asked, "that a man dies any sooner because he has made his will?"

"No; what do you mean?"

"I mean that danger will not come upon you because you possess a revolver. Come, don't be proud, take this from an old man and a countryman. We are in a strange land, and we ought to help one another if we can."

Set before me in this manner, to refuse would have been worse than impertinence. I therefore accepted the revolver, lamenting only, that I could not there and then enter a shooting-gallery, and there make my mark. So I said.

Mr Z. replied, "You are a sensible woman, and I am very much obliged to you for your company. Wish I was going with you; but can't—can't see my way." So saying he plunged into his cabin, and I was left in the warlike attitude of holding a revolver.

CHAPTER IV.

No wonder that Master C., who had bundled himself towards the end of the deck whereon I was standing, looking, I have no doubt, ruefully upon this acquisition, should exclaim as he saw me—"You have got a revolver there, stranger, and you are in a jolly fix, ain't you now, how to fire it off?"

That was just my difficulty, so I replied meekly, "Can you tell me if it is loaded?"

"Why, don't you know?" replied the youth with great contempt.

"Mr Z. has just given it to me, and I forgot to ask him if it were loaded or not. Do you know anything about revolvers?"

"Should rather think I did," was the response. "Let us have a try." As he spoke he took the weapon out of my hand, and soon solved the

doubt, as he discharged a ringing shot over the ship's side.

The report brought two or three of the stewards to where we stood, wanting to know what the noise was about.

"Did ye think I had killed yer grandmother?" answered the youth very rudely. Then as he saw the purser coming along, he changed his tone, and commenced to explain the situation, asseverating very strongly that the revolver would be in far better hands if the lady would give it to him.

As no one made any reply to this, Master C. addressed himself directly to me. "It is a jolly good revolver," he said, "and no use to a woman. Come now, I'll give yer five dollars for it; that's a fair deal!"

"I have told you that Mr Z. has made me a present of this revolver; pray restore it."

As the young gentleman seemed more than unwilling to part with this, his neighbour's property, the purser intervened, and speedily simplified the proceedings.

He rapped the boy's head, hurled him aside,

and held the revolver in his own hands, within a minute of time; and then in a calm, deliberate manner he showed me how to manage this murderous little instrument.

"You had better let your *mozo* carry this for you," said this good-natured gentleman. "I think I have a little case somewhere which this will fit into. I will look at once, as early to-morrow we reach La Libertad, and I shall be busy." So saying, he withdrew.

The day and the night passed, and the early morning found me fast asleep when the port of La Libertad was reached and left. As soon as I made my appearance on deck, one of the stewards accosted me, as he pointed to the canvas bag which had come on board with Mr Z.

"The gentleman left his compliments for you, madam," he said; "and I was to give you these cocoa-nuts. Mr Z. thought you might like them. Mr Z. would like to have shaken hands with you, but he would not have you called. He told me to say that he hoped you would have a good journey, and to be sure and get provisions wherever you can."

This was the first and last I have seen of Mr Z., but I shall always have a kindly remembrance of this sympathising eccentric fellow-traveller.

La Union was to be our next port, and in consequence the whole of the C. family were in a state of high excitement, as this was their point of debarkation. Great was the scrubbing and dressing; and as some of their old clothes were cast into the sea, I rescinded the wish of my heart,—viz., that the accordion would be assigned to the deep in their company. Much as we all had suffered from that instrument, and often as we had vowed vengeance against it, I don't think any one even shivered as the eldest C. girl performed "Home, sweet home" for the last time. It was an "adieu" to us in a manner, and they were going home to "father." The children looked softened, too, as they were put into fresh raiment; and Master C. was so civil to me that I made over the bag of cocoa-nuts to him and his on the spot.

Amapala was the next port, so I made my arrangements, and we were all in marching

order when, some hours later, we stood opposite La Union.

Like most places on this coast, La Union appeared to be an assemblage of red-tiled roofs, built in groups, the gaps being filled up by dwarf, green shrubs, and here and there by a tall palm-tree: the shore low and sandy, and looking as if quite ready to slip into the sea on the smallest provocation. This is a place of some magnitude, however, and is more regularly built farther in the interior. A good deal of trade is done here, and La Union holds the reputation of being an improving and progressive town.

The boats going to and from the port to a ship is, I think, always an object of interest to the seafarers, even if there is nothing concerned but a passing interest in the scene. On this occasion I looked across the water with more than ordinary curiosity, as the anxiety displayed by the C. family to greet the husband and father had quite enlisted my sympathies. Several boats had come to the ship's side, conveying merchandise and visitors, but no Mr C. put in an appearance.

The patience of the younger girl was becoming exhausted, and she had just fetched her breath for a scream, when a sailor came on the poop, and presented a letter to Mrs C., the mother. This was to tell her that Mr C. was far away up the country, but that he had deputed the vice-consul to meet her and her children, and that apartments would be ready for her in La Union.

The poor woman was at once disappointed and relieved. Very soon a large boat was waiting at the ship's side. A nice pleasant-looking man stepped on board, and it was announced that he had come, as requested, to fetch away Mrs C.

Whilst the luggage was being put in the boat, the consul held a little chat with me, and offered to take me over with them to see La Union, and partake of the hospitality of his house. There would be a difficulty about my return, and the time was very short, so I was obliged to decline the favour. All over the world the American men are particularly kind to lone females, and I scored this gentleman as one example more on my list.

After a short conference with the captain, the consul and his charges took their departure. Mrs C.'s blue feather and the redoubtable accordion perched on a mountain of baggage were the last we saw of this family. Now for Amapala.

"I shall order a particularly good dinner on your account, as you will dine before you leave us," said Captain C., laughing. "What do you like best? You know it will be long before you get a decent meal again."

This hard fact had by this time been pretty well impressed upon me; but as I am not one to "suck sorrow through the long tube," I replied, "Do not discourage a lone female, if you please; other people have passed through rough travelling, and why should not I?"

The captain was too kind-hearted to intentionally cause me any alarm, but recommended the only working part of the Honduras railway —that which runs from San Pedro Sula to Puerto Cortez—as the most direct route to get *out* of the country.

We were seated at the promised good dinner when the port of Amapala was reached. "Mr

Bahl, the consul, will come on board," somebody said. "Don't hurry; he will take his time, and so will we."

Apparently the consul did take his time, for we waited long before the custom-house boat put off from the shore. As it came nearer, we saw that two persons occupied it, a little white man, and a very large and very black man.

"The consul is not coming this time," said an officer; "here's his clerk and the captain."

"Captain who?" I could not help repeating.

"Oh," laughed the purser, "that black fellow is called 'captain' on account of his warlike performances. He has fought, he says, in three of the revolutions in which this country delighted to revel some years ago; and, according to his own account, he was the means of routing the enemy on more than one occasion."

"Do you believe this?"

"Not a word. The captain is an awful fellow to brag, but he can work and does work; I will say that for him."

"What brings him here?" I ask.

"He is the consul's servant, and I daresay

has been sent to fetch or carry something for the custom-house. I hope to goodness he has brought some fresh fish," continued the purser. "Have you your letter of introduction to Mr Bahl? As he is not here, you had better send it to the clerk. That gentleman is transacting some business with Captain C. just now, but I will see about it."

Presently up came the clerk. He was a dapper little man with a large white face, which did not impress me very favourably as to the salubrity of Amapala. I found, however, on conversing further, that he was ready to vouch that Amapala was a perfect sanitarium. "Fever! yah—no!" exclaimed he, in drawled out English. "People die! Yes, some time all must; but fever here—ah, no, no!"

"Nor snakes neither," interposed the chief engineer, with a wink at his neighbour.

"Nor yet snakes—no, no; mountain-leopards, one or two—never seen—all nonsense."

"But these mountain-leopards *used* to be called tigers," persisted the engineer. "Why, that mountain over there is still called the

Mountain of Tigers—*La Montaña de los Tigres.* You have it in both languages."

The little clerk would not admit the tigers, and knew nothing about the reason why the mountain indicated should bear such an ominous name. I was now told that my departure would be a matter of five minutes only; and I employed these in bidding farewell to the captain and officers of the good steamer Clyde. God bless them all, wherever they may be now. They were very, very kind to "Soltera."

When I was seated in the boat, the little clerk told me that I would have to spend a night, or perhaps two nights, in Amapala. The consul was a bachelor, and his sister-in-law was unfortunately away on a visit. "I will give the note when we land; I don't think the office will be closed," said he.

When we did land, it was quite dark. The black man took the luggage out of the boat, wading with it to the shore, for the boat could not come quite up to the landing-place. This done, he seized me as if I had been a cat, without word or sign, and from his strong

arms I was deposited on the strand of Amapala.

"Wait, wait a bit, ya-ar," said this huge porter. "Clerk him gone into office to talk to consul, let him read letter. You brought letter 'troduction, eh ?"

"Yes. I hope I shall not have to wait long."

"No; consul read letter, and send him ar-ders."

I suppose the consul did read the letter, for the clerk came out, and, poking in the dark to find me, said—

"The consul will write or send to you early in the morning: the only decent *posada* in Amapala is close here. You had better leave your heavy luggage in the office; I will take care of it. Now, captain, take the lady's portmanteau."

My black friend shouldered the portmanteau, and with—"You follow me close; I all right; you trust me; I as good as English,"—I threaded my way through what in courtesy must be called the streets of Amapala. The *posada* was not quite so near as I had thought; and as soon

as we had quite quitted the shore the black man said, "You wa-ant to go into the country, over the mountains?"

"Yes, I wish to get off as quickly as possible."

"Have you got serva-ant? I know good serva-ant, speak English wa-al; he knows all over the country—is strong—good cook. But it will cost you money, ah."

"Will it?" I replied quickly, for I saw at once what he was driving at; "I do not intend going beyond a certain sum, and——"

"Wha-at will you call that sum in dollars?"

"Never you mind, you are the consul's cook, and this is of no import to you."

"Ah, ya-as, ya-as; but if you make it worth while to ta-ake me 'long, you find it will be good. I know country—I respettable serva-ant."

We had arrived at the *posada* by this time. Only one door was open, and within could be seen, by the light of a solitary candle, a long brown table on which some glasses stood.

A figure came forth from behind this barrier.

He was a nice-looking lad, and was, moreover, that *rara avis*, a very clean-looking lad.

"Oh, it's you," he said to the black.

"Ya-as. I bring this lady here. Consul sent me with her, 'cause I speak English so well. Great comfa-art, have man about you that knows well how to speak English!" continued this conceited fellow, turning to me.

"Will you arrange for me to have a decent room and some refreshment presently?" said I. "Where is the woman of the house? I wish to speak to her."

"Oh no, I arrange," continued the black man. "You see I speak English."

"But I suppose the hostess speaks Spanish," I replied, cutting him short; and in that language I asked the lad to gò and find her.

He did so, and a tall pleasant-looking woman returned with him. She said she could supply me with what I required, and then the question of charges came under discussion.

The "captain" here intervened and meddled to such an extent, that the lad, evidently annoyed at his bad manners, said, "Hold thy

tongue; the Señora understands pretty well the language; she knows what is right to pay."

I really did not know, but I felt grateful to the youth for endeavouring to quench this nuisance, and so answered that the consul knew that I would pay what was just. Then I gave this very disagreeable porter a peseta (English, tenpence) for carrying the portmanteau, and very heartily gave him good-night.

Two men came in as the "captain" went out, and we were much amused to hear him informing them of the charge he was taking of the English lady. "Grand thing to speak English," I heard him say in that language, as he finally took himself off.

The men naturally scanned me after this remark, but respectfully and without showing any curiosity. They ordered "vino blanco," and sat themselves down to smoke.

"Pray excuse our taking you through the wine-shop," said the landlady, "but we have mislaid the key of the other door. It will be found to-morrow. See, Eduardo, take that box into the room for the lady."

A lantern was brought, and we passed through the back of the bar, and came out upon a wide verandah, which was bordered by a narrow strip of garden bounded by a high wall.

We entered the guest-chamber. Had I been qualifying for prison life, here was an opportunity for commencing an apprenticeship. The room was large, the aperture for the window closed by a heavy shutter with a bar across it; red tiles, discoloured by dirt and grease, composed the floor, and the dust lay in little heaps in some of the ridges of the most uneven ones. A bed covered by a bull's hide in place of a mattress, and a leathern pillow, were the correct thing here to serve as a place of rest. A wooden table placed against the wall, and a rocking-chair in fair condition, completed the furniture. Not a vestige of toilet-ware of any sort; not a drop of water nor any towel.

The lad deposited the portmanteau on the floor, and as this cheerful apartment was pervaded by a frowsy smell, I asked him to open the shutter. He hesitated, and looked inquir-

ingly at the landlady. Not understanding the reason of this, I said—

"There are iron bars, or a lattice, behind the shutter; nobody can get in; I want air."

"No, no," answered the landlady; "but at night, it was possible—very rare—once in a lifetime — a *serpiente* (snake) might crawl through."

"Keep the shutter close then," I replied with energy. "I did not think snakes came so near the houses. How dreadful!"

The boy explained that about a fortnight before a small *serpiente* had crawled one hot night through the lattice-bars, and descended into this chamber. "There was a large growth of thick damp herbage under the wall on that side," he said, "and it might be that a snake's hole was there."

"But why on earth is it not cleared or burnt out?" said I; "it is very dangerous for every one to let the herbage remain there."

"Quien sabe?" he replied; and then the opposite door was pointed out to me as being the one through which I could enter from the

street. This was a very strong door, but it was unlocked, the key being missing, as I was told on my arrival. There was a latch, by which the occupant could open it when the impediment enforced by the lock should be removed.

The landlady proposed to fetch a sheet and a pillow-slip, and then she added, with an air of triumph, "I shall bring you some tea—only think—tea. I know the English like that. What I have is very good, a present from an Englishman: he was hard to wait on, and he abused everything, but he had a good heart, Señora, and he gave me two pounds of beautiful tea."

"That was for your own drinking?"

"No, I don't like it much. The Englishman said,—he was a coarse man, Señora,—he would leave it for me to give to any poor devil of his country who might come to stay here."

She laughed as if it was the finest joke, and never seemed to perceive the sarcasm which might be veiled in the guise of this speech and present: under the circumstances I was very glad to represent the "poor devil." She went

out laughing heartily, and the boy and I and the lantern were left alone.

"Can you get me a little water?" I asked him, and a—here I could not summon the Spanish for basin, so I had recourse to signs.

"Oh yes, I know—wash face; leave it to me, I will bring what you want. I waited on an American lady once in travelling, and she liked much water," and as he spoke, he darted off with the lantern. I sat down on the bed, hoping that the tea would be brought quickly, and wondering what the beverage would be like.

The landlady returned with a candlestick in one hand in which was set up a large wax candle; under her arm was bundled the promised bed-linen, which, rather to my surprise, was clean and fine, the upper hem of the sheet being bordered with wide lace. The pillow-slip was trimmed in like manner; and when the bed was made up and a scarlet coverlet thrown over all, the bedplace really looked like a bright spot in this desert, and I began to expect other improvements.

Time brought the tea, and very good it proved. The English gentleman had evidently taught the hostess how to make use of his gift. The boy, too, brought toilet-ware piece by piece in spasms, and lastly a large red earthen jar full of water. He had fetched it from a well close at hand, and it was delightfully pure and fresh.

The lad withdrew, and then returning to the door summoned the landlady. A great whispering went on for some minutes: at length my hostess returned, and said in rather a mysterious manner, "You are going to Comayagua, are you not?"

"I shall pass through that town," I answered; "but why do you ask?"

"Oh, the boy comes from that part, and he does not want to remain in Amapala. Why not take him as your *mozo?* He is a good lad, and I would like to get him a place."

"He is in your employ, is he not?" I asked.

"What you may call employ, yes; but there is nothing to do for a lad like him. He sells wine for me, true; but I cannot pay him—

trade very dull, and very few come to stay at this *posada*. The lad only lives by doing a little 'tailoring here and there."

I thought this plan might do, as the landlady seemed so independent of Eduardo's services. She proceeded to give him a good character, and I promised that the consul's opinion should be taken on the matter. Good night was given, and I went to the door to fasten it after the woman's departure. It was closed by a latch; but it was perfectly innocent of either lock or bolt. There was nothing for it but to put the handle of my tooth-brush across the latch, and within it; and retire to bed with trust in Providence.

The next day came a note from Mr Bahl, telling me that I must wait one day at the *posada*, and he would arrange everything for my travelling onward; the lad Eduardo was required to attend at the office, if I would signify my intention of engaging him; and would I call early the day afterwards?

Little to do, nothing to see; heat and mosquitoes to endure,—such was the portion of the

waiting-hours. At the dinner-time I went into the dining-room, thinking it would be well to eat something substantial, and a number of dishes on the table seemed to offer a choice.

Variety there was, and very unappetising variety. The soup, called chicken-broth, was nothing better than drowned hen; and the meat, cut in strips, looked like leathern sandals from the remotest antiquity. Everything that could be chopped up was chopped up; vegetables which would have passed muster had they been served whole, were tormented into squash, and little black beans in yellow dishes were the only edibles which, owing to their small size, had escaped the universal carnage.

Some persons present, however, did justice to this feast. Long may there be found some to do so! For myself, I was thankful when the time arrived to pay a visit to the consul.

CHAPTER V.

THE consul's office in Amapala was a comfortable edifice, composed of whole store, half office, and half court of justice.

It was situated near the water's edge, and entered by a broad flight of stone steps. These gradients were very much the worse for wear, being persistently embroidered by detachments of the loungers of Amapala, which consisted generally of idle young lads who stuck like mussels, and peered within, and smoked and spat without, with intolerable pertinacity. A sortie made from the interior sometimes succeeded in dislodging them; but this effort on the part of the consul's clerks more usually ended in strong language and violent perspiration than in any satisfactory result. I believe an earnest hope is daily avowed, that somebody

coming in may effectually clear away impediments by treading the life out of some of these human pests.

Unfortunately also for the business public, a large *ceiba* tree fronting the right side of the building spread wide its arms of dark leaves, and beneath this shade were clustered mules, water-carriers, citizens in various styles of dress and undress, water-jars, melons, and naked brown children.

The grouping certainly was picturesque. But how Consul Bahl has stood for so many years, as he has done, the nuisance of a conversazione and debating club combined, held within four feet of his house of business, surpasses my comprehension.

Through a part of this assemblage I wended my way in the early morning of the day preceding that on which I was to start for Aceituña. The youths on the steps made room for me with some alacrity; and it was whispered among them that perhaps it was not so sure that Eduardo Alvarez was going with me. There had been no agreement drawn up by

El Consul, they knew; perhaps the Señora would choose some other *mozo* (lad). The meaning of these remarks was simply this: Eduardo was a little in arrear for his lodgings and other matters, and unless I would advance him a part of his wages to pay his debts, he could not leave Amapala. Concerning this, I thought it well to consult Mr Bahl, and further, to ascertain whether that gentleman would recommend me to engage him.

The little white-faced clerk who had brought me from the ship was on the look-out for my visit. A curtain was drawn aside at a corner of the office a few minutes later, and Mr Bahl stepped forth. He was tall, gentlemanlike, and very kind in his manner. (The American men, all the world over, are always kind to women.) He said I had a long journey to go certainly, but I must not believe all the nonsense I may have heard about robbers, and all the rest of it. Common caution, and to refrain from travelling at dusk, were recommended.

"I sent you word last night," continued the consul, "that I cannot provide you with the

mules you require here; and as for a muleteer, there is not one in the place I can recommend."

"You are sure that the custom-house officer at Aceituña can get these?" I inquired anxiously.

"A man has gone over there to fetch some things I want from the custom-house. I sent a note by him to Mr Z. asking if he can supply your requirements. If he cannot, which I don't think likely, there is nothing to be done but to send or go to La Brea: very good animals can be got at La Brea."

"Why are they so scarce here?" said I.

"Just as it happens; there are plenty when not wanted. I hope you will cross to Aceituña though; it will save you some leagues of rough road travelling. My large boat will take you across in rather more than an hour, and you could start as soon after landing at Aceituña as you choose."

I acceded gratefully to this proposition, and then made inquiry concerning Eduardo Alvarez.

"He came down to speak to me last night," replied Mr Bahl. "I suppose he has told you

that he wants a little money in advance, should you engage him?"

"Yes; he wants to pay a few little debts, he tells me. The people of the house give him a good character, and I like the lad's appearance."

"As far as I know, the lad is decent enough. Like all his race, he is apt to be idle; but really there is little employment here for a tailor, and that is the trade by which he supports himself.

"By the by," continued the consul, "as he comes from Comayagua, I certainly advise you to engage him, as you will have to take that route, and it is a great thing to secure a guide who knows some part of the country."

Then a lounger on the steps was despatched to summon Eduardo Alvarez. This youth soon made his appearance, and entered the office with a whole train of his *confrères* peeping in at the door. A rush was made at them by the little clerk, which frustrated them, evidently, in the intention of being within earshot. A chair was handed to me, and the consul and the lad carried on a conference behind the curtain.

The result of the interview was to this effect: I was to engage Eduardo Alvarez as my servant from Amapala to San Pedro Sula; to pay him fifteen pesos (something under three pounds English money), and to allow him at the rate of a peseta (tenpence) a-day for his maintenance. I agreed to advance eight pesos, to enable him to pay his debts; and so that arrangement was concluded.

"I will draw up the regular official agreement before you start," said the consul; "it will be better for Eduardo not to be too sure of the engagement; and I must be satisfied that he does pay what he owes. Never mind about the money; I will give him the eight pesos, and you can settle with me to-morrow."

"Have you a hammock in your store?" I inquire; "it will be such a comfort in the places through which we may have to pass."

"A hammock will save you many annoyances, as you will not be obliged to rest on the horrid bed-places of the country; and the lad can look out for a verandah to sling it in. I would advise you also to take a mosquito-net.

A coarse green net is best. White attracts the flies at night."

We go into the store, and I select these articles. "Then," said the consul, "you have brought your side-saddle with you, of course?"

"Side-saddle! No; I never thought of it. Can't I hire that with the mule?"

"I am afraid not here. A lady's saddle is private property, generally speaking. You may, perhaps, purchase one from some of the women about. Some one may like to make a little money. Eduardo, go out and ask among the women whether they know of any one who has a lady's saddle to sell."

As he went off Mr Bahl added, "I cannot come with you, but be sure and don't give more than twelve pesos." The lad very soon executed the consul's bidding, and in a short time were collected ten or twelve persons, declaring they all possessed the very thing. Eduardo found himself suddenly an important personage.

"Bring all of you the saddles you have to sell, and put them here," said he, indicating

a vacant spot, which looked like chocolate-powder. "I must see what they are like before I advise the Señora to purchase."

Away flew the women, and in a very short space of time several very extraordinary specimens of the leather trade were exhibited. In the general excitement, the lad had overlooked me altogether, and the others did not know that I understood the idiom.

"What do you think she will pay for this?" asked one, as she held up an enormous side-saddle, which was deficient in girths and stirrup, and which burst out in all directions with lumps of hair and padding. "Say fifteen pesos?"

An indignant "*vaya, vaya*" (get along) was the only attention bestowed on this candidate.

"Here is a saddle—a splendid saddle," said another, as she clutched the article from the head of a boy, who was carrying it into the ring. "See here! real Mexican; look at the embroidery. The English lady can have it for eighteen pesos. Too much?" continued she; "no; these English can pay. Say eighteen pesos, *mozo*, and there will be one for thyself."

Eduardo stooped down and examined this last offering. "This might do; but, see, the pommel is half broken through. Is there any way of getting this repaired?" he inquired.

"Ah, without doubt," replied the owner. "I can take it to Ignacio Gomez; he will make it all safe by *mañana*" (to-morrow).

The indefinite space of time indicated by *mañana* was known well enough to Eduardo. He might very likely see no more of that saddle for a week. He, however, said nothing to this, but assured the woman that the lady would not give that price.

"Ah, but tell her that there is no other in the place," suggested a bright spirit.

"That won't do, woman," retorted Eduardo. "The consul told the Señora that he knew there was a side-saddle belonging to the custom-house officer's wife at Aceituña."

"She would not sell it," suggested a man.

"She might hire it, though," interposed a fat woman, crowned with a bright yellow handkerchief. "No, no; the saddle must be bought here, good lad: the widow Niccoli has a

woman's saddle. Wait here: I will go and look for the widow Niccoli."

She sped away, and returned with a side-saddle, it is true; but such a rag! It could hardly hold together on the woman's head.

Yes, it wanted this and that, she agreed, as Eduardo pointed out its shortcomings. "Ah, yes, the rats must have eaten this piece of the flap, and there are no girths. Well, we will put these on. *Mozo,* this saddle will last for a little way; and then, you know, you can buy another farther on. The English lady won't mind. They can pay, these English! Ah——"

What answer Eduardo was prepared to give to this free-and-easy proposition, I do not know; and as my patience was getting exhausted, and my back was beginning to frizzle with the heat of the sun, I determined to cut matters short. Walking into the circle, I said in the best Spanish I could command, "I will not buy one of these; and, moreover, I will not give more than twelve pesos for the best saddle in Amapala."

Such an interruption in most places, and with

most people in any other part of the civilised world, would have called forth some excuses, or necessitated a speedy retreat, on the part of even the most hardened. Here, if the effect were electrical, it was in quite another way.

"Ah se habla nuestra idioma!" (she speaks our idiom) exclaimed the fat wretch who had proposed to cheat me so unblushingly. "Como es ella bonita, ed pequenita para una Inglesa" —(she is nice-looking, and small for an Englishwoman). The others crowded round me, some taking and stroking my hands, expressing regret that they did not know that I understood their "idioma."

It was difficult to know what to say, but I thought it right to express my surprise that they should combine to take advantage of a stranger, and that stranger a "Soltera," I added with great emphasis.

"Ah, they were sorry; they did not know; and all English have gold. No, they were wrong; a Soltera should have sympathy. But ah, they were so poor! It was so hard to

live! &c., &c. Have we not to live in all countries, Señora?"

I told them I was poor too, and that to pay a fair price was all I could do. So saying, I left them, and went straight to the *posada*.

The sun was now so powerful that it was a relief to undress and lie down. Hardly had I settled for a sleep, than a thud resounded upon the outer door, the one which opened on the street.

"Who is there? What do you want?"

"It is Antonio. He has a word to say."

"I do not know Antonio. Has the consul sent you?"

"No, Señora. I want you to take me as '*mozo de mano*,' for your journey."

"Thank you; but I have engaged Eduardo Alvarez."

"Think it over again, Señora. I should suit far better. I am a man of confidence, of maturity. Eduardo is only a boy, and ah! he knows nothing. Let me see you, Señora."

"It is impossible," I replied, "I am going to rest for a few hours; I cannot talk more."

"Well, then, I return again," contested the voice of Antonio.

"No, no," I called out; "once for all, I have engaged Eduardo."

"I know the agreement has not been signed;" persisted my tormentor, "will you see me before you sign the agreement, Señora?"

"No, don't come again," replied I, in a very decided tone. There is a lingering at the door, and at length Antonio takes himself off.

"Evidently no business is private here," say I to myself, as I roll the mosquito-net round me, and fall into a refreshing sleep.

A long time after this, as it appears to me, three gentle taps are heard upon the opposite door, opening into the garden of the *posada*.

This is free from public intrusion, and I call "Come in" through the mosquito-net. Eduardo appears, carrying on his head a side-saddle. He brings it towards me, and I put out my hand to touch it. There is no question of this: it is a beautiful, nearly new, lady's saddle, and it appears to be in excellent order.

I ask Eduardo whence he has procured this treasure?

"From the widow of the consul's brother. Señor Bahl thought of her just after you left the office, and he sent his *mozo* to see about it."

"The lady," he added, "would come and visit you, but she lives a little way in the country; and we go to Aceituña to-morrow morning."

"I am really very much obliged to the lady," I answered, as I looked at the pretty saddle of scarlet leather, handsomely stitched over with a flower pattern; "what am I to pay?"

"Twelve pesos, the sum the consul told you," the lad replied; "and, Señora, the lady is to give me a peso for carrying, and going to her. You do not object, Señora?"

"Certainly not; you have earned the money fairly. Am I to pay you now?"

"No, Señora; you are to pay to-morrow to the consul. We have to go to the office early, to get my agreement made out, I was desired to tell you. Will you go into the *comedor*

(dining-room), or shall I bring you something here?"

Recollecting what was the fare on the preceding day, I elect to stay where I am, and ask the lad to bring me some coffee, and, if possible, a roll of bread with it, and some bananas. Directly after I had discussed this meal, which was all very good of its kind, I dressed and went out to sit in the verandah on the garden-side of the *posada*.

Hardly had I sat there many minutes, when a lad belonging to the house announced that the consul's black cook wanted to see me.

"Ask him what he wants?" I rejoined. "Does he bring a note from Señor Bahl?"

In these countries, the most trifling communications between English-speaking people are always effected by note or letter. To trust to messages here would be the height of madness.

"No," answered the *mozo;* "the cook wants to see you himself." Before I could resolve whether I would receive him or not, the man stood before me.

Pulling off his cap, he said, "Very faine night,

ma'am — very fa-ine. You comprehend me English?"

"Yes; what do you come here for? And, please, stand a little aside; I want all the air I can get." He smelt of fish and black man very strongly; and this, combined with a *soupçon* of kerosene oil, somewhere near, was too much for my olfactory nerves.

"Oh ya-as, ya-as, suttingly. What I going say is very private. You go way to-morrow?"

"Yes; what of that?"

"Wa-ay, you know, you want servant, ma'am, strong, fight the way,—'sperience,—a very 'spectable servant, eh?"

"I have got one. Your master has made the necessary arrangements with Eduardo Alvarez. You need not take any trouble about this," I answer.

"Eduardo Alvarez. Bah! He worth nothing 't-all; poor trash—only boy in wine-shop; go about country mending clothes; he suit you! No. Besides, Consul Bahl has not drawn out 'greement."

"That will be done to-morrow morning," I

said; and, to get rid of him, I rose to go into my room as I spoke.

The fellow, however, was too quick for me, and he planted his square, powerful frame in my path.

"Look yaare," said he; "you take me along. I sa-arve you well—good fight—good cook. It will cost you money, but I am good serva-ant, ah. I quite fit to take care of a lady."

What I should have done I can scarcely say, as there was no one that I could call, the household being all within doors, or clacking on the other side of the verandah. Most unexpectedly I got immediate and efficient aid in the advent of "Lobo," one of the dogs of the house.

Now Lobo was a very delightful little beast, and we had become great friends. He bore the character of being such a fool, that he would put up with anything. Great, therefore, was my surprise when I saw him fly towards the "captain," every nerve in his body shaking with rage.

With a yell the "captain" bounded past me, and was away down to the shore before I could

speak. I had not been informed that Lobo had a special dislike to black people; and to the "captain" in particular. I felt very much obliged to the dog also, for giving me an opportunity of seeing the "captain's" good fight; the insertion of the letter "l" describes the thing much more accurately.

Once more we go to the consul's office at an early and punctual time. Eduardo meets me, arrayed in a clean shirt and a large Panama hat. Kind Mr Bahl takes me into his store, and gives me one or two edible matters, to help out the rations; amongst which, two tins of portable soup were particularly acceptable.

The boat is being got ready, and time passes, so that we are already nearly an hour late in starting.

Mr Bahl asked me if I had not been a good deal pestered by lads "applying personally" for the situation which Eduardo Alvarez now filled.

I said that there had been some other candidates, and that one of them was a personal friend of his own.

"A personal friend of mine? I have not the faintest idea to whom you can allude."

"A military character—one who has done wonders in three revolutions."

"Ah! I see now; you mean that black rascal, my cook."

"The very person. He has tormented me nearly out of my senses to take him with me," I answered.

"I wish you had told me this before,—the fat rascal. What I have done for him—for he quarrels with most of his employers—would take too long to tell. He gets good wages, very good wages; and now that he is used to the place, he wants to go off."

"I think this sort of thing is the fashion all the world over; but I should never have taken the man. I don't like him," I replied.

"When you are fairly gone, I will speak to him about his conduct. He never asked my permission, or hinted, even, that he wanted to leave," returned Mr Bahl, with great indignation.

There was not a chance of our being fairly gone yet awhile; for the boat was not in sight, and there were no preparations going on either in office or store, as far as I could see, to expedite matters. I ventured to remark that it was getting late.

"Oh yes," returned the consul; "we don't mind for an hour or so here. You will soon fall into the custom of the country. There is no fuss and flurry, and things, in the long-run, turn out just as well. One of the boatmen has not come round, but it will all be well. Just sit down in the office, and wait a little."

So I sat in the office, and Eduardo hied to the steps, and was soon in high gossip with all the loungers in Amapala.

Another half-hour passed, and then the little clerk, seeing that I was getting impatient, came from behind his railed-off space, and informed me that the boat would be ready very soon; he had heard the boatman's voice. Would I not, in the meantime, take a glass of beer? Mr Bahl had desired him to offer it.

I was very hot, and drank the small glass of

Bass's ale with relish; and I was further quite mollified on seeing the boat at the landing-place, and Eduardo pulling in the luggage. There was a good deal of delay before all was ready; but at last everything was on board, and we were seated in the boat and bound for Aceituña.

"You will not be able to get on to-day," were the consul's last words; "better stay at Aceituña for the night, and start at daybreak to-morrow. Good-bye. Take care of the lady, Eduardo." So saying, the kindly gentleman turned into his office.

Eduardo showed me his contract paper as we went along. I had the original in my pocket, having signed it, as well as he, the first thing after arriving at the office.

"Mine is a copy, I know; but the consul gave it to me, because I want to show it to my friends when we arrive at Comayagua," the lad said. "I hope you will stay a day at Comayagua, Señora."

"I hope so: you will be able to go to your friends for a few hours," I replied.

"And if I serve you well, will you keep me when we arrive at San Pedro Sula?"

"That I cannot promise; but you may be sure that I will do what I can to help you. If I cannot retain you, I daresay other people will require your services."

We had now got into the open sea, and only the red roofs and tufted palm-trees of Amapala could be seen in the distance. There was a light wind, and the fresh air was most invigorating, as we skirted some mountainous land, which in some parts was thickly overgrown with brush-wood and dark herbage; in others the coast was nearly bare.

The place looked so bleak and solitary, that I was prompted to ask one of the boatmen if any wild animals existed there.

"Oh yes," he replied, "there are some; *muy malos, muy malos*" (very evil, very evil).

"What are their names?" I inquired; for I thought here might prove the solution of the tiger question.

"Serpents—one or two very bad kinds—and other creatures."

"What are the names of the 'other creatures'?"

"Tigers of the mountain. Ah! I should not like to walk in that brushwood; would you, Candido?" said the man, appealing to his fellow-labourer.

I afterwards learned, from reliable authority, that what are designated "tigers of the mountain," are, in reality, small leopards. But they are fierce enough, and in many instances have taken human life. The skin of these animals is very beautiful, and forms sometimes the chief ornament of a Hondureian house.

After an hour's good rowing, the boat was turned into a narrow creek, bordered on either side with overhanging trees. This was, in a measure, a relief from the heat of the sun, which, in spite of the awning, was beginning to penetrate through my hat. Here was little to interest us, save sometimes the having to exert ourselves in order to keep the boughs of the trees out of our faces. The creek grew narrower, and at length a short point of land gave evidence that we were in front of the custom-house at Aceituña.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr Z., the custom-house officer, handed me out of the boat and conducted me into his dwelling. This was a low thatched house, separated only by a mound and a damp patch of grass from the edge of the creek. The entrance opened upon the principal room, which was a combination of reception and store room. The sides of the boarded walls were fitted up with tiers of wooden shelves, and on these lay packages of all shapes and sizes. Bales of cocoa-nut fibre seemed to predominate; and several layers of cow-hides made great show on the low shelves. Bushels of what I supposed to be grain, or seeds, were huddled here and there; and a great heap of white beans, and a measure on the top of it, entirely filled one corner.

The ground was the usual earthen floor,

stamped as hard as iron, and depressed here and there; so much so, that it required some attention to walk safely over it.

A handsome hammock, slung from the rafters of the roofing, and a wooden table, were all the furniture of this department. For ornament there was hanging on a nail a large-sized embroidery frame; upon the canvas of this was in course of representation a very gay macaw contemplating some remarkably fine grapes. A Berlin-wool-work pattern was displayed open on a nail higher up, and thus could be seen in its entirety the magnitude of the macaw's temptation.

The custom-house officer, following the direction of my eye, said "*Mi sposa*,—that is her work." Somebody came to the aperture which divided this apartment from an inner one. This was *mi sposa*, a pretty Indian girl, who appeared to be many years younger than her lord, and who was followed by a still younger girl, whom she presented to me as her sister. They both wore the *nagua* costume, though it differed a little from the strict Mexican style. The *nagua* costume consists of a chemise, very fully plaited

at the arms and round the shoulders, leaving the throat bare. A thick strand of hair generally furnishes the back expanse between the nape of the neck and the shoulders, and a shapely bodice of some bright colour covers the person to the waist. The Mexican girl here indulges in petticoats of various lengths till the feet are reached; but these Hondureian women were content with one short garment, comely enough, but not so picturesque; and they lacked the silver ornaments and embroidery which add so much to the "make-up" of the Mexican lady.

The beautiful eyes and shapely feet of the custom-house officer's wife, however, were attractive enough; and her cultivated voice and elegant pronunciation showed that she had received some education. I pointed to her work-frame, and asked her where she had learnt to embroider.

"A la escuela, muy buena escuela," she replied (at school, a very good school); and added, in her beautiful idiom, "my husband is English; he married me because I have had some education."

And for more than that, thought I, as I glanced at this elegant creature; but I looked very serious and practical, and remarked in reply that "education is a grand thing for everybody."

"Ah, yes," cut in the younger sister, "when it is properly applied."

I was so astonished at this remark, from such a person and in such a place, that I was startled into asking her what she meant.

"I mean that very wicked things are often done by educated people," returned the damsel, with a jerk of her head. "I have my reasons," she continued, "but I will not say more."

"Very wicked things are often done," I replied, "by people who profess much religion; we must not judge by individuals. These matters must be viewed in a broad and general way."

"No doubt the Señora is right," was the answer; "but I have my reasons. Ah, I have heard some fine tales, about people from Europe too!"

I daresay she had; but the subject dropped

as the sister asked me to go into her room and take off my hat. "You will sleep here," said she, indicating the hammock with her hand, "and the *guarda costa* will look to your *mozo*."

"The *guarda costa*—what is that?"

"See here," she answered, opening the door, which had been kept fast closed for coolness' sake; "these are the *guarda costa*" (coast-guard).

A few very fine-looking men, some in shirts and drawers, some with jackets in addition, and all bearing muskets of a very old-fashioned pattern, were walking to and fro. One of them, a remarkably strong-looking man, kept regular pace, and tramped up and down with the regularity of a British sentinel.

Mr Z. here joined us. He said, "This is the man I propose to send with you to-morrow. Will you speak with me when you have taken off your hat? I want to tell you what I have done for the journey."

I retired with the Señora. Her bedroom was boarded off from the room we had quitted,

and quite as miserable in its accommodations as the rest of the dwelling.

On returning to the outer room, Mr Z. asked me to buy the animals required for the journey, and named a price, which even I, in my inexperience, knew to be exorbitant, and said so.

"The price of mules has risen considerably," urged Mr Z.; "they are so much required in the mining districts now."

"Very possibly, but I will not *buy* any mules; I shall be happy to *hire* those you have as far as Arimesine. Mr Bahl told you in his note the price I ought to give."

There was no more to be said to this, and the wife proposed that we should go out and see the animals.

A coast-guard-man brought round a small chestnut mare, a nice-looking creature, but "weedy" withal.

"There," said the custom-house officer, "is the one I have arranged that you shall ride. That belongs to *mi sposa;* it is a great pet; *mi sposa* often goes long distances on her without attendance."

In the meadow was a very nice-looking *macho* (male mule), which was pointed out as being the one for Eduardo's use.

"Where is the baggage-mule?" I inquired.

"Oh, he will come round in the morning. He is resting in a stable close by." Abel, the man who was to go with us, grinned. I thought there was some mystery here.

The early dawn, which is lovely in this country, brought with its first glimmer coast-guard-men, the mare, the mule, and the baggage-mule; the latter we were particularly delighted to see. To my amusement Mr Z. offered to sell me the three at a considerable abatement of the price urged the day before. Fortunately I adhered to my resolution of hiring only.

On being mounted, I found that the pommel of the saddle was fixed immovably on the left side. There was no time to alter this, and in consequence, on setting off, I began to realise that it was anything but pleasant to ride faster than a walk at first.

"Never fear, Señora," said Abel at length; "we have a long way to go, and if we are to

arrive at Arimesine to-night we must get on a little faster."

Being accustomed, or nearly so, to the motion induced by the difference between the English and Spanish way of mounting, my confidence returned, and I declared myself ready to increase the speed.

"Wait till we turn off to the left, Señora; there will be more shade, and then we can get on well," Abel remarked encouragingly.

Eduardo had ridden a good deal in advance; as he neared the road turning to the left, we saw the baggage-mule suddenly break loose from his hold, and dart at full speed among the trees, Eduardo following as hard as he could gallop.

This made the mare a little restive, but Abel's strong arm subdued her. "Let us turn into the left path," said he; "you will have to dismount and wait whilst I go on. The baggage-mule has bolted."

Turning into the road on the left, which was little more than a bridle-path through shrubs and nice soft grass, the man dismounted me,

at the same time tying the mare to a low bush. There was plenty of grass, and so this one of the party, at least, was very much at ease.

"You won't mind being left a short time," said Abel; "it is quite safe. I had better follow Eduardo quick. Ah, it was time," he said, returning with something in his hand. It was my dressing-comb, in two parts, and full of dirt and sand.

I accompanied him a little way, and had the pleasure of picking up one of my slippers, part of a little book, and many other things with which my handbag had been packed. Further on lay my long tin box, unfastened, indeed, but stove in by what was unmistakably a violent kick in the wrong direction.

"Ah," said Abel, contemplating this, "the mule is wild; he has rushed against the trees, and the baggage has got loose; I hope there is no accident. Señora, I am sorry to leave you alone, but I had better get on to Eduardo."

So he sped away at a flying swing-trot, and I was left literally to pick up the pieces.

A little further on was what I recognised to

be a shirt which I had bought at Señor Bahl's store to present to Eduardo. The boy was so delighted with it, that he had said he would wear it when he arrived at Comayagua to visit his friends. Here it was, then, in pieces, and a part of it torn quite out. The ground bore marks of hoofs in all directions.

All the little things I had collected for refreshment on the road were destroyed without mercy. Here some biscuits ground to powder, and amalgamating freely with mother earth; there some plantains and bananas reduced to pulp; in another place was my tin of portable soup, stove in, and almost unrecognisable.

Fortunately, perhaps, I had so much to do in getting these fragments together, that I had scarcely time to think how unlucky this first start of mine had been. Two hours at least would have been wasted, and there would be no time for rest in the middle of the day. Having gathered together all I could find, I sat down on a large stone close to the mare, with the collection by my side, and with anything but satisfaction in my mind.

Half an hour must have passed, and then the mare began to fidget and look about her. She had heard voices, and she almost tried to put down her head on my shoulder. It has been said that she was a pet animal; and really her action seemed to say, "Don't you hear that?"

I by this time had heard the voices distinctly; so I stood up beside the animal and waited for the speakers.

Round a little winding projection, which jutted out on the principal path, came two quiet-looking men towards me. Lifting his *sombrero* (that ugly thing, the hat proper, is unknown in Honduras), the elder of them said, "We are sent to help you, Señora, English lady. We have met Abel and the *mozo*. Mule very bad—very savage; won't allow itself to be loaded again. Abel thought you would allow us to take you on. We are woodcutters, and Abel knows us."

I turned to mount, the younger lad helping me. As I did so, I expressed a hope that Eduardo was not hurt.

"No; he is a good rider, and the other mule behaved well. But how are you to get on—

quien sabe? That mule is *el demonio* himself."

The men took the long box between them, and a parcel was made of the *débris*. We soon reached Abel and the lad, who were sitting on a little bank. The riding-mule was browsing calmly enough; the baggage-animal was tied to a tree, and was still stamping with rage.

"What are we to do?" I inquired in despair. "Had we not better go back?"

"We will try and see if the baggage-mule will bear loading again," said Abel; "it would be such a loss to return. We will try."

The four men approached the offender, and were most gentle in their treatment. All was to no purpose. As soon as he felt the load on his back, he started violently, and rushed against the tree, with the determined purpose of pushing it off. Abel now pulled out his handkerchief and blindfolded the animal.

This had the effect of quieting it, and as it was nearly exhausted from kicking, the load was replaced without much exhibition of feeling on the sufferer's part.

Everything being packed, we went on our way, one of the woodcutters undertaking to lead the refractory mule. As long as we went slowly all was satisfactory; but the moment we attempted to get out of a walk the mule showed fight. Even the baggage was of no avail.

The woodcutters were obliged to leave us; they had their work in another direction, and they could not lose time. "I am very sorry—very much ashamed," said the elder, with emphasis on the last word, "that the custom-house officer should have let you hire that beast. It is a robbery; the mule is not half broken; it is quite young, and I do not think it has carried a load more than thrice in its life."

"Abel has not told me that," said I.

"How should he? He is a soldier, and he has to obey the customs officer; he must not speak; but he knows as well as I do that the creature does not belong to the customs officer. Señor Z. has hired it from a charcoal-burner who lives near him, and I have no doubt he has made a good thing of it. You have paid beforehand?"

"Yes; I have hired these three animals to take us to Arimesine."

"May you get there to-night! *Adios, Señora; muchas gracias,*" as I put a trifle in his hand. Thus speaking, our two assistants wended their way.

The situation was certainly very unsatisfactory, and Abel's replies to my inquiries did not tend to enliven matters. "At this rate," the man said, "we shall never reach Arimesine to-night; and I am under orders to bring back the animals early to-morrow morning."

"But the delay is entirely your master's fault; he had no right to give me an unbroken animal to carry the baggage. If we cannot reach Arimesine to-night, what are we to do?"

"We must stay at a place called Goascaron; the head man there will take you in. He is an Italian doctor, and keeps a store. Oh, *muy bruta—muy bruta!*" (horrid brute) broke off Abel, as the mule turned sharp round and literally ploughed the earth with its feet, refusing to stir, though Eduardo dragged it with all his strength.

Here was a nice state of things! It was equally impossible to advance or retire. Fortunately, as we were consulting whether we really ought to return to Aceituña, we met a countryman, who was riding a nice-looking mule. To him Abel hastened with all speed. A short conference, and matters were to go on well-oiled wheels I hoped. The baggage was transferred from the refractory baggage-mule to the consul's riding-mule, and the countryman lent his animal for our use. Then our rampageous friend was given over to the man's keeping, and some arrangement was made as to how this treasure was to be restored to his owner. It was disgusting to see him go off as meek as a mouse the moment that he was led away.

"These creatures are very wise," Abel said; "that brute knows as well as I do that he has had the best of it. I know that man: he is going to take it to a stable." Then he continued with a grin, "The master won't like our turning Carlos into a baggage-mule, though."

"The master has behaved very badly through-

out. Are you really obliged to take the mules back in the night ?"

"I must obey orders, Señora ; I am a soldier."

"We have lost so much time, that I am sure I cannot ride to Arimesine; under the best circumstances it would have been a long stretch. Very well ; I will stop at Goascaron, and I shall write to Consul Bahl and tell him how badly Mr Z. has behaved. He must have known that we could not reach Arimesine to-night."

"I cannot say, Señora ; but it is a great many leagues off."

"How many ?"

Abel could not tell. In this country it is equally impossible to ascertain correctly either the length of a distance or the time of day. A wholesale importation of clocks and milestones would certainly prove a national benefit in this direction.

The sun was now fierce, and we had quitted the shade of the forest and scattered trees. Eduardo dismounted and offered Abel his turn to ride ; but this strong, cheery man declined. "Let me ride when I am tired," he said. "I

will stay by the Señora; it is very tiresome for her to use a saddle with the pommel placed on the side opposite to the one she is accustomed to; the mare, too, is fidgety."

So she was. A passing bird, a stray cow tearing at a hedge, all startled her; and farther on, when we met a drove of mules, she rushed into the middle of it, turning round and round, and exhibiting a strong inclination to bolt. Abel explained that horses have in general a very strong dislike to stranger-mules; for this reason—they are seldom stabled together. The mare agreed very well with the mules at home, because they were accustomed to each other and had been reared together.

We got on, however, at a fair speed, halting two hours afterwards by a pretty running stream to take some refreshment. Eduardo sought among the huts of the country village near, and succeeded in obtaining some milk, *tortillas*, and a delicious water-melon.

The men went to a little distance to smoke, and I took advantage of the opportunity to bathe my feet in the lovely stream. They

were burning from my wearing black boots, a most unwise article of dress to adopt in tropical countries. I had a little tin case, containing a square of soap, which, fortunately, was in my pocket, and so it escaped the devastation caused by the baggage-mule; and with thankfulness for this comfort, I revelled in the pebbly delicious water.

The painter of river scenery can nowhere in the wide world find more charming subjects for his brush than the lovely water-courses of Spanish Honduras. The cascades among the mountains are simply magnificent, and deserve to be classed among the finest in any land. The lowest and dirtiest of villages in the interior can generally show a beautiful running stream in its midst; and it is, I think, in consequence of this, that typhoid fever and blood-poisoning are unknown.

These pests are not at this time the correct thing to die of in Honduras, as appears to be the case in our own land. Can it be that polluted water is in reality the mainspring of half the ailments of the English people? My

fervent wish for Honduras is that she may ever deserve her name. *Hondo*, being interpreted, means a pond or brook; and the brooks of this fair region are so pure and health-giving, that when the iron hand of progress penetrates here, may its mission be other than that of tainting, for commercial greed, the life of a country.

Ah, how many in our own England turn to spirits and to beer, because the only water to which they have access is poisoned by chemical drugs, or is made the receptacle of all foul things!

A weary ride in burning sun and over rough road brought us to the outskirts of Goascaron. My strength was nearly spent, owing to the badness of the road and the uneasy motion caused by the manner of riding.

Strong, kind Abel more than once carried me over the smaller streams; for, as the darkness came on, the mare plunged unsteadily, and sometimes carried me into very deep water. The heat, too, had been very prostrating; and so it was with a feeling of

relief that I heard a clear incisive voice call out, "Is that the lady from Aceituña?" Eduardo had ridden on in advance, and the Italian doctor was standing at his side waiting to receive us.

CHAPTER VII.

WEARY and wayworn on the outskirts of Goascaron, and depressed by my misadventures with the baggage-mule, I was right glad to hear the voice of the doctor calling out, "Is that the lady from Aceituña?"

"Señor, si," responded Abel on my behalf; "and a very weary day the lady has had. I will tell you about it presently. Come, Eduardo, hold the mare whilst I lift her from the saddle."

The Italian doctor, however, anticipated the attention; and somehow (for the power of assisting myself had left me) I was seated in a rocking-chair, and a short man with finely cut features was looking steadily in my face.

"You are faint from over-fatigue," he said; "there is nothing more the matter. You want a little cognac."

He went to fetch this, and I was soon revived by swallowing a portion of the stimulant. But I was aching with a dull pain from head to foot, and it was with difficulty that I could speak. It was as from a long distance off that I heard Abel recapitulating all our misfortunes,—small enough, perhaps, in the temperate zone, but with the sun at 102° in the shade, *otra cosa* (another thing), as the Spaniards say.

"You should have rested in the middle of the day," the doctor added decisively. "It was a shameful thing to send an unbroken animal; and—you don't mean to tell me that you are going to take the cattle back to-night?"

"Such are my orders," replied Abel.

"But the lady has hired them, and I suppose has paid for them, to take her as far as Arimesine?"

"She has, Señor; but, you see, she has not got there. I am ready to go on now, but I think it will be too far for the lady. I am very sorry. What can I do?"

The doctor pondered a moment. "You had

better return: stay, and refresh for a couple of hours. There is a good moon too. I can provide mules here to carry the lady on. Better that she should lose a little than get ill. By the way," continued the doctor quickly, "was this lady told that she had hired animals by time, or did she understand that you were to return with them to-night under any circumstances?"

"She says, Señor, that she understood that the mules were at her disposal until she should arrive at Arimesine."

"Ah, well, I am glad it is a Briton, and not any one of this country, who could behave so badly to a woman, and to one travelling alone too."

"Trust the British for cheating and swindling one another whenever they can get the chance in an out-of-the-way country; mind I say in an out-of-the-way country," shouted a voice, which was undoubtedly an English one, though employing the Spanish language with more force than accuracy.

"I wonder who on earth this can be!"

thought I to myself, as the speaker went on to question Abel with more or less bad Spanish, garnished with a round British oath here and there. It was not long before the mystery was solved; for a large, red-faced, choleric-looking man, with a merry twinkle in his eye, stood before me. He looked what he eventually turned out to be—a retired captain in the British merchant service.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said; "but I heard that travellers had come in, and one of them an English lady. I am sorry you have had such a day of it—very sorry. Now if you would like to go on with the animals in a few hours, I will take precious good care they don't return to Aceituña till you have done with them. I am a match for Abel, though he is a big fellow."

"Oh no, thank you," I replied hastily; "Abel has been so good, so attentive to me, I would much rather not go on. In fact, I am so tired that I am thankful to rest here."

"All right, then; but if I were you, I would

write to Consul Bahl, who *is* an honest man, and tell him how this precious custom-house officer has behaved. Bah! what makes England send all her rubbish out here?"

"Not all, surely," I replied—"there must be many exceptions."

"Just you look at that Honduras railway, madam," he went on. "That railway was planned and carried out by a parcel of fellows sitting in their offices in London. The prospectuses they issued were all deceptive; people were deluded into investing their money and taking shares in it; a great crash came, and many of the best people here were utterly ruined. Some of these fellows, I know, subscribed to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and others for the Conversion of the Jews. Bah! yah, yah! bosh!"

The doctor intervened. He remarked that the captain had lost greatly in this Honduras railway himself, and the very mention of the subject made him nearly *bola*.

"*Bola*; what does that mean?" I inquire.

"Drunk. He is morally so now; and

perhaps," added my new friend, "he may be a little so physically: it is his weak point."

A very pretty Indian girl, with sweet eyes and a timid manner, now came forward. She said, "We cannot make you very comfortable to-night, Señora, but to-morrow it will be better. Don Graciano says you must stay over to-morrow."

I went with her into the house, and there, partitioned off, in a corner of the long low store, was a comfortable bed, screened from the public view by some clever arrangement of blankets and coverlets. Eduardo, by desire of the host, had put in some toilet-ware. This was a great comfort; for the Hondureians, as a rule, are quite independent of this necessity of life: indeed, in the interior of the country, to possess even the meanest article of crockery, is to be accredited with more than the usual means of supporting life. Thus, in the opinion of many, Don Graciano would be accounted a well-to-do (*hombre de bien*), if not a rich man.

Abel came to take leave of me before I retired, and it was with real regret that I parted

with this honest, kindly guide. I pressed a little remembrance into his hand, and thanked him sincerely for the help he had given me.

"I shall keep this for my next little daughter," the stalwart fellow answered. "I will put it round her neck, and call her *Inglesa. Adios.*"

The tramp of the mare and the mules told us that Abel was on the way back to his gracious master; and so we all turned to our beloved sleep. It was strange on the next morning, in looking through the blankets, to find myself lying in bed in a general store. Yes; there were the shelves laden with jars of pickles, bottles of wine, tea-canisters, and kerosene-lamps. Other shelves held a variety of articles, all suited to the requirements of country life; and a compartment was entirely fitted up with drugs and medicine-bottles, supported at one end by a pestle and mortar, and at the other by a large glass machine, which in shape was a cut between a hot-water bottle and a pillar post-box. A curling projection, also of glass, rendered this article

a subject of my earnest scrutiny. A small chair in the angle of this compartment, and a tiny table before it, seemed to announce that this was the professional part of the establishment.

A knock from somewhere brought me to my manners; and I had just time to close the loophole in the curtains when I heard a voice from somewhere follow the knock from somewhere.

"Excuse me, Señora," called my host, "but you had better rise now. We open very early in these parts, and people may be coming into the store earlier than you may like. Are you better?"

"Much, thank you," I called out in response, "but still very tired, and my bones ache."

"I have prepared some medicine for you to take later in the day. Your *mozo* will bring some water." Almost immediately a large red pitcher, of the form they used long years ago in old Egypt, was poked under the blanket, and I quickly proceeded to avail myself of this, to me, the greatest comfort in life—viz., cold-water ablution.

I got dressed in time to avoid coming in contact with some men who had entered by the large oak door of the store; they were all talking "mule," and were smoking like limekilns.

The doctor had been hovering about somewhere, and finding me ready, took me, *sans cérémonie*, into an inner apartment. There, on an iron bedstead completely covered by a mosquito-net, lay the young girl I had seen the night before, fast asleep, with a naked brown baby of about three months old lying on her bosom. Don Graciano, with a smile which singularly softened his hard well-cut features, put his hand beneath the curtain and brought out the little creature, which he hugged with the fondest pride. "My little daughter—my first-born," said he. "Look, Señora, she is plump and very clean. I follow the English fashion, and my little one has her bath night and morning. Is it not so, my pearl?"

"My pearl," who was as brown as a berry, danced and kicked and *looked* great things.

This infant had certainly much "speculation in its eyes;" and its dark nature's costume never seemed to make me aware that this little specimen of humanity was entirely "in the nude."

Passing through this room I was conducted to the back verandah; here were tables and chairs, and some coffee-cups put out in array, apparently for immediate use. In an incredibly small space of time the mother of the infant was at my side: she seemed to be washed and dressed by a feat of legerdemain. She called a *mozo*, who was evidently in the service of the house, and handed the child to him, speeding her way with great alacrity into the *cocina* (kitchen).

The *cocinas* are always built apart from the dwelling-house in these countries; they are composed principally of the baked mud called *adobe*. The *batterie de cuisine* is not extensive, the chief utensils being, usually, a small furnace, a portable grate, a stone for rolling and baking *tortillas*, a plate or two, and a coffee-pot. The smoke may escape from the hole in the roof, or

it may gush out at the door, just as it happens: nobody cares for such a trifle as this.

Don Graciano came out on this verandah. "We shall have coffee directly," he said; "but the regular breakfast is a little before mid-day. *Mozo*, place the chairs." And he took the infant as he spoke.

Some delicious coffee and maize-cakes were brought, and we sat down to the table. I hesitated a moment, and then said, "Should we not wait for the Señora?"

"Oh no," replied the husband; "she is busy in the kitchen; she does not take her meals with me. Now I want to tell you I think I can get mules and a muleteer for you: I have been speaking to Eduardo. Not a bad lad, but he is idle; mind you keep him to his work, and make him wait upon you. Well, as I was saying, there are some very good muleteers in Goascaron just now, and I can recommend one especially. He is a good walker, and a first-rate man in his way. Will you allow me to see him for you?"

I reply gratefully, "Yes, by all means."

"Possibly I may be able to manage for you. Marcos is not cheap, but his mules are thoroughly good; and as you have some awkward rivers to ford, his strength and his knowledge you will find valuable. *Mozo! mo—zo!*"

"Estoy aqui, Señor" (I am here, sir), gasped the little lad, as he emerged from the *cocina* with his mouth crammed with *tortilla*, and his hands full of some mess of cake and honey.

He was ordered, as I gathered, to summon Marcos somebody, and Vicente somebody else, and above all the "Sir," and to be quick about it. The rapidity of the Italian must have been like an electric shock to the semi-Hondureian, semi-Spanish lad; but he was evidently accustomed to it.

Eduardo had a lazy, lounging, happy-go-lucky way of going about his business, which made him appear to be more indolent than he really was. The doctor fell upon him as he observed him lounging beyond the verandah,—"Have you looked after the lady's baggage?" said he.

"I have received no orders," replied the

mozo. "What am I to do, Señora?"—with a slight emphasis on the Señora.

I looked at Don Graciano, who remarked, "Your tin box is very dirty, and the rest of the baggage looks as if it had been rolled in clay. It is in the stable; and you," added he, turning to Eduardo, "had better go and clean it; you have nothing to do."

The youth bowed himself out of the way with the usual placid composure of the Spanish race. "Ah," said Don Graciano, with an air of disgust, "these fellows won't hurry themselves for anything under the sun: this is one of the true breed. Now mind, Señora, mind you make him stick to his work."

Don Graciano here left me, being inquired for from outside; and presently I heard his voice in full swing—short, decisive, and incisive—taking the lead amongst several others, whose numbers seemed to increase as the minutes passed on.

"No; once more no, Enrico," said my host; "you will not do. Your animals are bad, and you are idle in starting. The Señora must not

take you. Ah, here is El 'Sir.' What do you say, 'Sir'; do you advise this man to travel with your countrywoman?"

A rampaging and snorting, together with the answer, instructed me that the individual addressed as El "Sir" was no other than the English captain.

"My goodness, gracious, patience, *no!*" responded El "Sir." "There is only one of these fellows fit for this kind of journey; that is Marcos. Where is she?"

The "she" was supposed to indicate me; and Don Graciano came out, and brought me into the little coign of vantage which served as the consulting-room.

The present business being "mule," the company were convened at the lower end of the store. There were some respectable-looking men among these; they had evidently been summoned to hold this *convenio*, and I felt sure that the Italian doctor would do his very best for me. Somehow I relied more upon him than upon El "Sir," although the latter was an Englishman.

"May I go beyond the price you mentioned last night?" asked the doctor, in a low tone. "Marcos is here: he demands more than any other muleteer, but his mules are far superior to those of the others, I think."

I thought the matter over, and gave the doctor full authority to arrange as was best. "Remember," I added, "that money is an object to me."

By this time the man alluded to as Marcos had entered the store, and seated himself on the low counter in a free-and-easy manner. The rest stood round, and, with *cigarillos* in their mouths, talked and bargained and gesticulated in a manner which would not have disgraced a market-place in Paris. Here and there a man would make some reference to "la Señora"; and one fine fellow made a short run at me, in order to impress upon my mind that El "Sir" knew nothing about the business, and, in fact, would be very much better *in* the sea.

The Hondureians, I observed, consign their obnoxious or troublesome acquaintances to *El*

Mar (the sea), very much as we consign our own "objectionables" to Jericho or to Hong Kong.

About half an hour passed in this way: no actual business was done, and some of the men left, promising to come back and resume the subject later in the day. "The Señora does not set out till to-morrow morning," one of them said.

"And not then, if she is not quite rested and well," said the kindly host.

One by one the muleteers left, talking outside upon the subject of my journey.

Marcos then sprang off the counter and came towards me. Taking my hand, he brought me to the principal door of the store. "Señora," said he, "look at that mule; she is a noble mule. Luisa will carry you till she drops. So gentle, too," the man continued, as he stroked her head. "La querida!" (The dear one.)

She was a handsome beast, mouse-coloured, with black ears and large intelligent eyes. I really admired her, and delighted Marcos by repeating after him, "La querida."

"You will take me?" said the man. "I am half Indian, and the Indian always has the fine ear and the rapid tread. I can write too, and I can read," added he. "A good priest held an Indian school. Some of them are bad here, Señora, but this one, O Señora! he was good to the Indian race."

"I will speak to Don Graciano. He thinks, however, that you ask too much."

"Then, Señora, I will put it like this. You shall pay me the sum I shall agree on, and you can ride at leisure; no hurry. I will bide your time; and if you like to go quick one day and slow the other, all the same to me. I should like to go with you."

"Will you be careful in crossing the rivers, and assist me in the difficulty of passing the rough places? I am afraid you may be impatient with me, Marcos, for I am not a bold rider."

"By the dear Christ that died for us," said the man, making the sign of the cross, "I will serve you faithfully and well."

I felt that he was sincere; and so, on going into the house, I requested the Don to draw up the necessary agreement.

"Now take this draught I have prepared for you," said this active man, who never seemed to forget anything or anybody. "Rest a little now, and after that I hope you will accompany me to the bull-chase."

"What! a bull-fight?" said I, in astonishment.

"I said a bull-*chase*, Señora; quite a different thing."

"What is the difference?"

"It is the custom here annually to allot three young bulls to the hamlet, in order to improve or raise the farm stock. On a certain day the bulls are let out of the corral, and the young men of the parish chase them, the bulls having a fair start.

"The animal, when caught, is brought into an enclosed space, garlanded with ribbons, and adjudged publicly to the victor. It is a pretty sight; for, whilst the chase is going on, the other men dance with the girls to the sound of a very fair brass band. I want you to see how well we can conduct our *fiestas* among the mountains."

This *fiesta* was the cause of the presence of so many muleteers in Goascaron: they were to

take part in the dance, but none of them, I think, entered for the chase.

Late in the afternoon the doctor, in gala costume, knocked at my enclosure, and was ready to escort me to the meadow where the dance was to be held.

"Where is the Señora?" asked I.

"She is not coming. She must remain and attend to the infant. Our female servant is to go to the general ball in the evening, and all the *mozos* are gone to see the chase."

The sound of a clarionet and horn playing a lively measure announced that we were near the scene of amusement; a rushing noise, and voices shouting from afar, proclaimed that *el toro negro* (the black bull) had been loosed, and was far away, flying up the hill, with a score or more of young men provided with lassos tearing at full speed on mule-back after him.

The first dance was the graceful *ronda* of the muleteers.

This is called *ronda*, because the dancers are surrounded by their mules, which are all decked with their gayest trappings; some of these bear-

ing panniers, sometimes filled with flowers, sometimes filled with babies. These last generally accompanied the band vocally, and *ad nauseam.*

It was very interesting to watch the evolutions of this graceful dance, and the unerring precision with which the men and women mazed between the quadrupeds, waltzed back, formed a ring in the centre, and finished all by the head muleteer raising his *machete,* as he stood alone in the centre of the ring and shouted, "Evviva la ronda de los mulateros!" (Long live the muleteers' dance!) After that there was some very good waltzing, the step being accurately turned, although the men wore their mountain boots, which are heavy. The dance was held under two immense trees, just in the hollow formed between two slopes; but still the heat was great, and I wondered how they could work away as persistently as they did.

The women and girls wore the white mantilla, in honour of the day, short white dresses decked with some bright embroidery worked in the material, and all wore flowers. The elder

women and *chaperons* were dressed usually in dark raiment, with the graceful black mantilla thrown over the head. I grieve to say that this elegant article of dress is giving place to a style of horrid little hat, which a French commercial traveller, some two years ago, had introduced into the country. A young stumpy girl, arrayed in one of these, I saw pegging away with a *mozo* of Don Graciano's; and as she appeared to have put everything she possessed in the way of ribbon and flowers upon the said hat, I earnestly hoped that the awful spectacle she presented would alarm the beholders into declaring for the mantilla for ever.

Shouts and huzzas and a rush of the dancers to an enclosed space, announced the capture of the black bull. He had run well, it was said, and therefore all the more merit for the captor; and so they both received a wonderful ovation. As the stranger, I was requested to place the red cord, which is usually thrown round the bull's neck after the chase, into the hand of the victor. As I did so, some one in authority proclaimed that this *toro* had been fairly chased

and lassoed by Trasquito Gomez, and was now his lawful prize. Did any one deny it? No; and so Trasquito and the *toro* went off to their dwelling-place. Another bull was let out of the corral, and given seven minutes' start. The young men and the mules and the lassos were hard at work, and the dancers and the band returned to the great chestnut-trees.

I was getting tired, so after drinking a glass of mountain wine to the health of Goascaron, Don Graciano conducted me back to his home. On the way he told me that he had made a fair arrangement with the muleteer Marcos, as to my journey. "He is as wild as a hawk," said Don Graciano, "and will have the uttermost farthing; nevertheless, take him, for he is a splendid muleteer, and his beasts are first-rate."

The Indian girl with her baby—this time covered by the white linen scarf which depended from the mother's head—opened the door. She told me there was to be a dance on a large scale in the evening, for the *gente ordinario* (common people), and that Marcos and Eduardo would both be there.

"You will not start very early, then," said Don Graciano with a smile.

At break of day I was out, as I wanted to look at the scene of the dance and the chase, but to my disappointment a heavy mist hid all from sight. I had not been in the village church, so I wended my steps to it, and pushing the door open, I walked in. Small and poorly furnished; but kneeling before the little altar were two or three worshippers gathered together. That half-hour was sacred to them and to me.

The mist by this time had entirely cleared away, and now, behold the sky! a sea of opal light, upon which floated minute masses of soft pink colour. One of the largest of these rested for a time upon the summit of one of the lower mountain-peaks, as if a rose had fallen thereon and waited to be kissed.

A few moments later and the whole of the rosy tufts had faded away like a shower of leaves, and a blue-green light shimmered in their wake, the herald of the sun.

He rose at once in the full glory of his

strength, enveloping cloud and colour in his golden robe; flushing high mountain and lowly cañon with his regal tints, and upon all things making his presence to be felt. I wondered not, at the moment, at the devotion of the ancient Persian, nor at that of the Indian, whose morning "prime" was the worship of *El Sol.*

My own (weak woman's) tribute was a gush of tears. It could not be restrained, all was so beautiful and so grand; and Nature seemed to greet, with a mother's love, one who was alone in the world!

A hot day was imminent! The prearranged hour of starting was already long past, for I had wished to be in the saddle before the air became as heated as white steel. The axiom that time was made for slaves, is very rigidly enforced by example in these regions; and nobody ever is or can be punctual to an exact or specified hour. Forty minutes' "law" is by no means considered to be a liberal allowance.

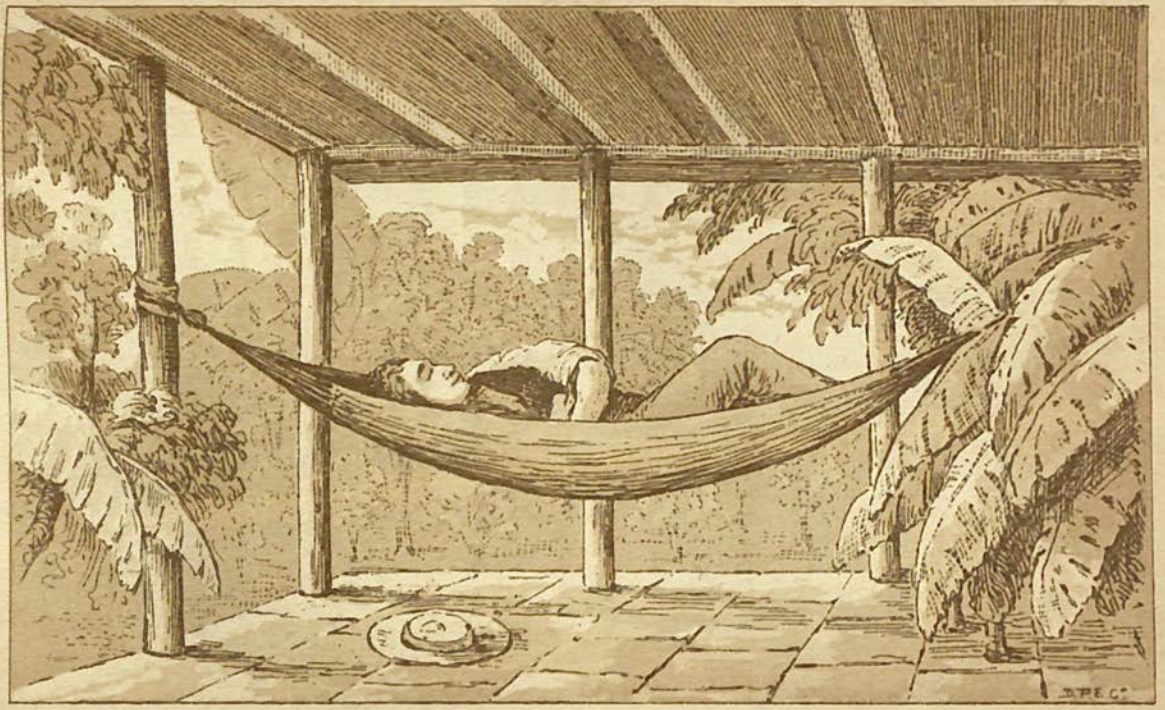
Doubtless the ball of the previous evening had been late, and both Marcos and Eduardo

might be sleeping the sleep of the "danced out." I remember, too, that I have been young myself, and how often a servant has had to wait up for me and mine till we should return from a friendly "hop" or a county ball. Poor fellows! they have a hard life, and a dance to them only comes once or twice a-year. Let them sleep on.

Thus musing, I refrained from tapping on the wooden shutter, beneath which Marcos was stretched on a bench, prone and motionless.

Presently there arose sounds of hurry-scurry in the little piazza in front of Don Graciano's house, a stamping of mules, added to the chatter of some four or five women who were full of gossip, probably about the preceding day's *fiesta*.

Opening the shutter full wide, and looking through the iron bars which did duty for a window, I saw that the muleteer had risen, scared awake, no doubt, by the women's tongues. Nobody had aroused him intentionally, for the Spaniards and most others allied to them by blood have a particular objection



SE DUERMA — HE SLEEPS.

to awakening a sleeper. The most important business can and must wait: El Señor is asleep, and cannot be disturbed. No matter whether the slumber be in regular course; whether of fatigue and exhaustion, or merely the temporary *siesta* induced by heat and languor, or—idleness. "*Se duerme*" is conclusive: leave the sleeper in peace, till Nature in her own time shall unclose his eyes.

There was plenty to attend to; for to load a baggage-mule requires some skill and great care. Much suffering is often caused to animals through carelessness in this respect. It was very interesting to watch the proceedings of Marcos. How carefully he arranged the cloths which are first placed on the animal's back before the luggage is strapped on, and how cleverly he weighted every article, in order to give the burden an equal poise! Eduardo assisted in this, and Don Graciano looked attentively to the saddling of the mule that was to carry me.

"I will now go and take leave of the Señora," I said, and betook myself to the back verandah.

The girl had her little naked baby on her arm; I took it from her, and kissing it, said, "You will have so much pleasure in rearing this little one; and from what Don Graciano has told me, you must be in the way of making a nice fortune for her before many years have passed over your heads."

"Perhaps so," she answered, her quiet equable tones being somewhat broken, as I patted her naked shoulder and pressed her hand, to thank her for her hospitality. "I shall never forget you," she went on to say—"never. The sound of your voice, Señora, falls like the drop of cold water when one dies of thirst."

This elegant compliment, expressed so simply in the loveliest language in the world, touched me much more than it flattered me. It was the outcome of woman's sympathy with woman. I had taken her hand with marked respect, and treated her as the mistress of the house; and the avowal of my indebtedness, addressed to herself directly, seemed to give her the utmost satisfaction. "Va con Dios," she said, after a short pause, and turned into the *cocina*, evi-

dently not venturing to accompany me to the front court. A thought flashed into my mind like lightning; I wonder it had not occurred to me before. This must be the case. Don Graciano is evidently a man of superior station and education, and a pure white; the girl is as unmistakably of Indian blood. Here is an example of following out "*el costumbre del pais*"! (the custom of the country.)

Whether my conjectures were ill-founded or not (and I only based them on the state of subjection in which this young woman seemed to live), I had no time for speculation, as the object of my rumination was waiting, hat in hand, to assist me to mount. To lift a lady guest into the saddle, and to walk at the head of the mule and conduct it and its burden some way into the open, is one of the duties of hospitality in these far-off hamlets. It is a remnant of the courtesy of the ancient races: the lowest as well as the highest all rigidly observe this custom.

The last arrangements for departure were soon made, and I, a timid rider, felt that Luisa

the mule, and myself, would travel amicably together. Gentle, handsome beast! It says well of her that she carried me nearly one hundred and sixty miles without hap or hazard.

This happy result, on my part, was more of good luck than of good guidance.

The *macho* was a little tiresome to start, and he danced about vigorously, with Eduardo on his back. It then transpired that he was a young, high-couraged animal, and that Marcos was taking him this long journey in order to tame him and complete his education. It came out afterwards that Marcos intended to sell him on the return journey, and would no doubt be able to do so at a high price. I was glad to hear this, as it secured good treatment to the animals; not that I think Marcos was naturally cruel, but he was a hard man, and I do not do him injustice in saying, that to make money by the service of his mules was his first and paramount consideration.

"Marcos is a good muleteer," said Don Graciano, in allusion to him in our parting words, "but he dearly loves money. Mind everything

is included in his contract with you; and be sure you do not give him a *cuarto* to pay for forage or stabling of the mules in the places you may have to stay in. He will try this, probably; but be sure there is generally plenty of grass and water, and the animals are always better when they feed out at night."

Marcos and Eduardo then came up, and received from me a *peseta* each for their daily expenses; and it was agreed I should dispense this sum to them every morning on starting, and thus save difficulty in the accounts. We were now fairly on our way to the mountains, and, in a few words more, Don Graciano gave me "God-speed."

"Marcos will bring me word of you when he returns home with the mules," he said lastly. This hospitable stranger now bent his way to his dwelling-place, and I felt as if I had left a friend.

CHAPTER VIII.

We travelled a few miles in silence, for the men were evidently languid from the want of sleep, and I was too much engrossed by the beauty of the scenery, and in admiration of the glorious country through which we were passing, to need conversation. Luisa, the mule, carried me well, and her even pace left me at liberty to enjoy the sweet air of these magnificent Hondureian mountains, so little known to the outside world, and so little appreciated by those who dwell around them.

Here, rock, wood, tree, shrub, and water are on a grand scale—all, so to speak, the best of their kind; and the humble wild flowers, adorning the far-stretching fertile valleys which slope between the clefts, are rich in colour, and far from wanting in perfume. The varying lights

PASS BEYOND GOASCARON.

—the glimmering opal and the deep purple haze alternating with the fairest blue of the heaven and the blackest depth of the cloud—as we passed on our way, presented a scene, the like of which I had never seen before, and never expect to see again.

I may write, perhaps, with some partiality; for what the sea is to many, the mountains are to me. I was born amongst them, in the grand Pyrenees, and so I am their daughter. When sickness of body and sorrow of heart fall upon me, I will arise and flee to the mountains. My strength surely comes from them.

We ascended higher, and in the elastic air the men became refreshed, and as hunger and noonday approached, we agreed to halt. There was a *hacienda* picturesquely built in a cleft of the ranges. To this we wended our way, and were glad to see the chestnut-trees stretching grandly in front of this demesne. Here was shelter for the animals, since the grass and shade were deep all around; and we human beings could sling a hammock on the lowest branches of the fine trees.

The baggage-mule was disencumbered of my hammock and the little bag of provisions only.

"We have only a short time," said Marcos; "and as it is her first day's journey she will not be distressed if she is not unladen until night."

Soon after, the lady of the *hacienda* came out. "My servants saw you camping," she said with a charming smile. "We have illness in the house, and so my cousin and I have come to pay our compliments here. I regret that I cannot ask you under my roof."

The young lady alluded to as "my cousin" was a most lovely daughter of old Spain, about fifteen years of age. She said little, but seemed interested to meet, for the first time in her life (it appeared), an English lady, travelling through Spanish Honduras.

This simple courteous welcome quite relieved me; for I confess I had felt somewhat abashed at walking, literally with bag and baggage, into a stranger's territory, and using it as if it were an inn.

"I will send you some milk and coffee," the lady said; "and after that, I would recommend

you to take a *siesta*. You seem to have good guides and animals. Ah, you want them in these parts! *Adios.*"

The milk and coffee, so liberally promised, came by the hand of a *mozo* of the place. He told us that his mistress possessed large herds of cattle; indeed, as far as eye could range, the fields and slopes were dotted thickly with kine. Then after helping me into the hammock, this *mozo* laid himself down between my two companions, and the whole three of them slept soundly with only the fallen timber for a pillow. I, in my more elevated position, simply rested, and bestowed a benison upon the soul who first invented the hammock.

Exactly as two hours had passed, Marcos was on his feet. A muleteer is warranted to awake at any moment, and so he almost always does. It is the only action of punctuality in the whole republic.

The *mozo* gave us a helping hand, and we started at a good round pace for Arimesine. It was nearly dark when we rode up to the principal house in this place. The village was merely

a broken square of thatched and yellow-washed hovels; the principal one was *posada*, general store, and forage "emporium" combined. Nothing of interest here, as my journal runs:—

"Reached Arimesine at seven. Passed a fairly good night, as the woman of the house possessed some notions of propriety. Quite in clover, for I had a railed-off space wherein to swing my hammock, divided from the public room by my travelling rug and a shawl hung on a high clothes-horse. The men slept in the verandah. There was a white basin in the establishment, and Eduardo got this filled with water, and in a manner I managed to wash."

We were on our way very early the next morning, and travelled at a good pace. The country had become a little more broken, and foliage in great luxuriance was beginning to disappear. Marcos gathered me some bunches of the quinine tree, which is a graceful shrub in all its stages. The flower is white, and is in shape a cross between the pentstemon of our gardens and the stephanotis. The latter lovely parasite we saw at various intervals in great profusion.

The peculiarity in the growth of the stephanotis is that it requires a background of some other climber to support it, and at the same time give it a slight protection from the sun. Thus aided, the plant will reach to an immense height, and I have seen it winding round the trunks of large trees, and spreading rich bunches of its blossoms far and wide, even if it have the slenderest stem of some other parasite round which to wind itself. Quite alone, the plant usually shrivels up, and at best deteriorates.

As we rode onward the sandy ridges became toilsome to the mules' feet, and it was here that we first found a specimen of the water-giving plants of the country. Eduardo recognised it instantly, and as he cut its thick stringy stem with his *machete*, a watery fluid oozed out, which had rather a sweet taste. The *mozo* had forgotten the name of this plant, but said it was common in Honduras. He mentioned another of rarer species, which he termed *peligroso* (dangerous) and which from its description must, I think, have referred to the *Mimersopa balata*, an india-rubber water-giving plant.

A story is told that a Frenchman passing through Guiana met with this curious production of nature. The coolness of the fluid as he tasted it induced him, as a precautionary measure, to qualify it with some kind of alcohol. The juice of the shrub coagulated in the unfortunate traveller's stomach, and after a time of intense suffering he died. An examination took place, and it was found that the internal organs were literally closed up by india-rubber.

Thus it should be well understood by travellers in tropical countries that every care must be taken in the use of these wonderful vegetable alleviators of human misery—thirst.

The increasing heat, and the disappointment of not being able to meet with any refreshment in any one of the cottages which we passed, were making us all feel more or less out of sorts. Passing a narrow rivulet, I asked Marcos to fill me the gourd-shell, which wayfarers here always carry at their girdle, with water. "I am so thirsty," I said; "please attend to me quick."

Instead of complying with my request, the

man turned round, and resolutely refused. "Not a drop, Señora," said he; "it would hurt you. Your muleteer must not let you drink here; it would be bad for your health."

"Why, Marcos?"

"Because, Señora, the bottom of this rivulet is muddy; there is no sand nor gravel; and look —see! you would not like to risk swallowing one of these!" He pointed to a plant near the mule's hoof: it was covered with dark-brown blossoms, which turned out, on inspection, to be leeches.

"No, no," said Marcos,—"not of this for you, Señora, nor for Eduardo, or the beasts. I know my duty."

I was sure that he did; and though my thirst was great, I said no more on the water question, but instead I proposed that we should share a bottle of wine, which Don Graciano had generously given me, as he said, "for emergencies."

The bottle was soon produced from the canvas saddle-bags carried by the baggage-mule, speedily uncorked, and a draught poured out

for me. No sooner had I tasted it than I returned the gourd to Marcos, with an expression of disgust.

Marcos tasted, and then did Eduardo: wry faces and sputtering were the immediate effects of the taste of the potion on both.

The matter soon explained itself. The heat of the sun and the jogging pace had turned the wine into very strong and very stringent vinegar. There was no help for it, and it was decided that we had better get on to San Juan del Norte as fast as possible.

We had met a peasant in the morning, on his way to work in a maize-field: he directed us to San Juan del Norte, as being a good station whereat to pass the night and replenish our commissariat, which was becoming very low. It was therefore with great vigour that we pushed on to San Juan del Norte.

The character of the land had now greatly changed, and we passed through marshy grass-land, which presented no interesting features, and was very heavy for the mules' feet. We travelled through this for some time, and a

thick soft rain, which fell with the dusk, did not improve matters. At length, in a downpour, we did reach San Juan del Norte, Eduardo having ridden forward to secure accommodation, and search out the most decent dwelling.

I saw by the expression of the lad's face, as we rode into a little square of mean houses, that he was far from being delighted with the quarters which necessity had forced upon us. "It is a dreadful place, Señora," said he, in a whisper; "I have been to two houses, but this old woman's seems the best."

I looked round before dismounting, and perceived an old woman, who might be any age she liked to call herself after seventy, with white hair, and a very handsome pair of black eyes and eyebrows. She was followed by a train of men, who might be her sons and grandsons; and beyond these were several girls, mostly of the lowest class, who stared with all their might, but said nothing. These were waiting to see me dismount.

Whether the cause was fatigue, combined with the long fast and the damp, I never could ex-

plain, for I had not felt ill; but as soon as Marcos had placed me on the ground, the whole of San Juan del Norte seemed to revolve on a pivot, and I fell down in a dead faint. A sensation of being dragged forward, and the sound of voices a long way off, was the last perception of my senses. For many minutes all things were lost in utter unconsciousness.

The return to life was not effected in the usual method of administering cold water, smelling-salts, or other restoratives suitable to the attack; but the pungent *aguardiente* (brandy), which Marcos not only applied to my nostrils but forced down my throat also, was strong enough to rouse a rhinoceros from the deepest swoon.

My eyes quickly opened, and half raising myself in the hammock, I gasped out, "Oh, give me air! Marcos, send these people away; and where did you get that horrid stuff?"

The old woman here advanced, and stood on her dignity. "Señora," said she, "do not be offended; these people come to receive you after the fashion of the country; it is our custom

when the stranger enters our village for all the inhabitants to come out and offer welcome. The rain has prevented many from being here; but see, there are still some few."

Looking past her, I saw that a number of persons were standing in a group near the door, and evidently with the intention of staying there until something should be said or done. So, getting out of the hammock, weak and giddy enough, I managed to bow to the company, and say to the old woman in particular, that I hoped the inhabitants would excuse me, for I was really ill, and it was imperative that I should be alone for a while.

The company in general seemed inclined to linger; but Marcos strode amongst them, and with a sweep of one hand opened the door, whilst with the other he signed to them to make speedy exit. This was done with the air of an emperor, and without the utterance of a single word.

Marcos then asked Eduardo to go and look after the mules, and turning to the woman said—

"Hay leche aqui?" (Have you milk here?)

"Nada" (none), was the reply.

"Hay carne o tortillas?" (Have you meat or bread?)

"No," was the decided reply.

"Hay cafe?" (Have you coffee?)

"Tampoco." (Nor that either.)

Here was a state of things; and though the woman was perfectly civil, she did not make the slightest attempt to alleviate matters.

The muleteer, with a shrug of his shoulders, then went out, saying he must go and buy food, wherever he could find it, and I was left alone with the "lady" of the house.

"Can I not have some place where I can be private?" I asked her gently. "Any corner will do, as I have brought my own hammock."

"You can sling your hammock from these hooks," she replied, pointing to two large iron bars which projected from the solid beam running along the roof.

"But have you no sleeping apartments for the females of your family?" I inquire.

"What for? We all sling our hammocks

at night in this room. I have a bed-place, because I am too old to move about much. We lie down in our clothes, and when the men go out to work in the morning, then we dress."

The guides coming in soon after the close of this dialogue, I consulted with them as to what was to be done; and asked if my hammock could not be slung in the verandah at the back of this dwelling.

I was told that this was impossible. The rain was pouring steadily down. I must lie down in my clothes, and we would get away as early as possible on the morrow. Meanwhile Marcos had been able to get some coffee made, and he suggested that in the absence of my guides to fetch this, I might change my shoes and arrange my dress as best I could.

There was nothing else to be done; and after my hammock was slung, and the mosquito-net thrown over it, I was supposed to be "quite private," although in the course of the evening six persons of different sexes stepped into the other hammocks, and laid themselves down for the night's rest. The old woman took off her

upper garment, tied her head up in a cotton handkerchief, stepped into her bed-place, and without curtain or mosquito-net travelled off to the land of Nod.

The rain had driven the mosquitoes into the dwelling, and at a later hour these pests became intolerable. A stir from without arrested my attention, and presently a lad with an iron brasier entered, lighted a candle which was stuck against the wall, and returning to the brasier, seemed to stir it up. At that instant a smoke and a most fearful smell pervaded the whole room, suffocating and nauseous in the extreme. I drew my net over my head, and lay wondering what this could mean; but nobody else seemed to be annoyed, or even to take notice of the nuisance. A more miserable night I never passed; and it was with the greatest thankfulness that I saw a gleam of the morning's light through the door which opened to let the first riser out.

Eduardo soon entered, and expressed a hope that I had not suffered from the smoke, a flavour of which still pervaded the apartment.

"It is worse than peat," he said, "for it is the droppings of the stable and cow-shed, which, when dry, are burnt, and are the most effectual remedy known against an invasion of mosquitoes at night; but I know, Señora, you must have been nearly poisoned by the smell."

Soon after, the mules and baggage were ready, and Marcos informed me with great satisfaction that he had been able to procure a supply of *queso* (cheese). This "cheese" is really nothing better than curd, very sour and hard, turned up with yellow borders. Being very much compressed, it takes up small space, and is usually eaten with *tortillas* in all parts of the interior.

We took leave of the woman of the house, and as I pressed a small gratuity into her hand, I thanked her for the shelter her roof had afforded us. This was but right, as it was quite in her power to have refused us admission altogether; and it was not for a traveller to grumble when the entertainment provided was such as the highest and lowest in the country are accustomed to as a matter

of course; and, indeed, they know no other. A bowl of milk had been procured, which I drank before mounting, and thus I felt provisioned for the day.

Our journey, after some miles of travel, began to be on the ascent, and shortly we were far up the mountains. Here, losing the luxuriance of herbage and grass, we came upon rock, and cedar and pine trees. Clumps of these last grew in great profusion, scenting the air with the peculiar healthy smell of the Aleppo fir, which, alternating with masses of the elegant deodara tree, gave a magnificent clothing to tracts of land which might otherwise be bare. The mountain was not a high one, but the descent on the other side was so abrupt that I was glad to get off and walk, notwithstanding that the path was little else than an assemblage of loose stones, mingled with gravel and dust. Gradually this path narrowed, and we entered a high defile, so full of rock, and holes, and enormous roots of trees, that every step had to be picked with care, and our wary baggage-mule slipped for the first time, and more than

once seemed on the verge of tumbling head over heels.

Here I could not help admiring the wonderful skill, and, I may say, the tact of both mule and muleteer. Did Marcos run forward, and, by the short rope which was attached to the head, guide the baggage-mule to another part, or jump with her from stone to stone, Luisa would stop, look at what was going on in front, and imitate precisely what her companion was being led to do. The *macho*, being younger, required all Eduardo's care, and it often displayed an inclination to kick every stone to pieces that came in its way. Sometimes the beasts would decline to walk where Marcos guided them; and when they refused the path, it was always because insecure stones or a hole were in the way, or some obstacle which the muleteer had overlooked. Marcos, on his part, never insisted where the mules steadily refused to go onwards. "They are very wise," said he; "they know better where to walk than I do. They like my help when they really need it, poor mules!"

Then with a touch or a pat the mules were told conversationally how hard it was for us others; and further on the man called, "*Mulas, mulas,* do you not hear the sound of the water? On, my *mulas,* on."

A grateful sound we all heard, that of a low rushing noise, rising and falling like the murmur of the wind. It was the voice of a brawling stream, which flowed at the outlet of the defile. Save the rush of little children's feet over an upper floor, there is no sound sweeter to me than the rippling of a running stream over a pebbly bed in the hot summer-tide. Weary and travel-stained as we were, what in nature could give us kinder welcome than the call of the delicious water, with its wealth of cascade and spout and gentle flow? Water that here contained within itself a myriad of loving voices, one of which specially seemed to tell us that it was waiting to lave our feet, and spread out wide a veil of argentine drops, should we descend further into its depths to bathe and live.

We had heard its call from afar; and now the mules quickened their pace and snuffed the

air, and we human things pulled ourselves together, and marched bravely forward, for down a winding path in front we had descried a glint of the tossing stream—a friend indeed.

Eduardo ran forward, and, boylike, dashed into the brook, danced from stone to stone, and danced again, and plunged his head into the water, and shouted, "*La agua, la querida agua!*" (the water, the beloved water!) and then, between him and Marcos, I was taken from the saddle, and in their strong arms I found myself seated on the bank on the opposite side, wondering.

A moment or two afterwards a gourd-shell was filled for my use, and I was asked to drink to *El Hondo*, the water-god of this lovely region, from whom old legend saith the name of Honduras is derived.

Dear water-sprite, whoever you may be, or whoever you may have been, I did drink to you with a benison; for did I not feel thankful that at last in your sweet domain I could indulge in the salutary life-giving bath? I forgot San Juan del Norte and all its woes, as I

called to my attendants to search for a secluded spot in which I might wash and be clean. Right willingly did I drink to *El Hondo.*

The mules were taken across and unloaded. There was plenty of grass, and we decided to remain two hours in this shady spot; for here it would seem that the sun had retired in favour of *El Hondo,* and we were willing to take advantage of the comforts which were poured upon us. Eduardo routed from among the wraps an old blue bathing-gown, which had generally served as a mattress for my hammock; and armed with soap and towels, I made my way to the primitive bathing-place.

"Now, Señora," said this good young fellow, "you will be as private as possible, and we will go a good way off, and will be sure to watch and prevent anybody coming near you. Marcos and I will light a fire and make the coffee, and we can eat our breakfast before you are finished. And I will have your breakfast ready; we have got eggs; and then when you breakfast, we can smoke and sleep; eh, Señora?"

This arrangement suited me well, and I found

my way a little up-stream, to a curvature in the bank, which served admirably for the purpose, as it was screened by a mass of low-spreading bushes, and in its centre stood a high stone, over which a mimic cascade just made impetus enough to act as a shower-bath. It would be ungracious to pass over the enjoyment of the delicious luxury, without a word to those who sit at home, and perhaps cannot believe that a bath can be taken in this wise in the open air without some infringement of delicacy.

"My friends," I reply to such objectors, "there is much more immodesty in the bathing-places of Brighton, Havre, Dieppe, where the meretricious costumes displayed under the name of 'bathing-dress,' are enough in many cases to strike terror into the most hardened beholder. Witness the fat objects who crusade down the beach in bolster-cases, short at knee, and denuded at bosom; and who know, and are not unwilling to know, that their masculine acquaintance are looking on with more or less of criticism, according as their feelings may be benevolent or malevolent."

Here there was no gaping, grinning crowd, and I felt strong in the conviction that my guides would abhor the slightest attempt to look upon me until I should be dressed. Had I gallivanted about in a harlequin's attire, such as is seen constantly on the persons of the bathers at fashionable watering-places in England, they, in their uncivilisation, would have regarded me with the greatest contempt, and perhaps would have called me mad. So my bath was begun and ended in enjoyable ease and privacy; and my bathing-gown being taken to a bush whereon the sun did shine, I had nothing to do but eat my breakfast spread on soft grass, about which grows, in great profusion, many varieties of the *Digitalis*.

The mules had also undergone a rubbing and scrubbing; the harness and baggage were neatly stowed away under the trees; and the men, after attending to my wants, turned to a smoke and a sleep.

They had earned the luxury well and fairly, and so I promised to act sentinel; and whilst they slept, I sat under a tree, and arranged the

pages of my journal, a little grey bird, with scarlet-tipped wings, just looking near now and then to see that Soltera was doing the thing fairly.

The delicious coolness and silence of the place were more than compensation for the late wretched night; and it was with real reluctance that I called out "Time," when the two hours allotted for rest had passed away.

The sun was fierce when, after a careful reloading, we again set out: the journey was to be all hill-work, up the side of a grand mountain, which in a short time became so toilsome, that it was all I could do to keep my seat, and even Marcos was glad to ride longer in his turn with Eduardo than was his wont.

Our accommodation on this night was more comfortable, it being at a farmhouse a little off the highroad. The next day presented no particular features; and the day after that I had occasion to take advantage of Don Graciano's caution with respect to Marcos' propensity for making money in all shapes and ways.

We arrived at a small village, to find that the public schoolroom had been most kindly placed

at our disposal by the master. My hammock was to be slung in the room, and the men were to sleep in the verandah on benches.

I had just settled myself for the night, when, to my surprise, Marcos lifted the latch and walked in.

"Señora," said he, "I want half a dollar, please."

"What for? Why do you come at this time?"

"I have put the mules into the stable of the place, and I want the money to pay for them." This with a very decided air.

"No, Marcos," I replied, "I will not give you the money. In the first place, you had no business to put the mules in the public stables without consulting me; in the second place, you know you expressly promised never to do so unless there were a scarcity of grass and water."

"There is a scarcity of grass and water here."

"That is strange, Marcos; the schoolmaster told me that there was abundance of both; besides, I saw Luisa feeding in a meadow not an hour ago."

"Then you will not pay for stabling, Señora."

"Most certainly not; you can do so if you choose," I replied,

"Señora," answered Marcos, "if you do not give me the money, I will leave you and go home when we get to Comayagua."

"No, Marcos; if you leave me, you will go to-morrow morning. We can settle at the office of the *alcalde* here; you will have broken your engagement, and so I must place the papers before the *alcalde*, and he will arrange what I am to pay you. Good night; shut the door behind you, and don't come in here till I call. Now go."

The man stared at me, but said nothing. After waiting a moment, he turned on his heel and went out, shutting the door with a clang.

The situation was uncomfortable enough, but I was determined not to be victimised. The matter certainly was small, but to accede to this demand would only be to open the way to further extortion. I plumed myself, too, on the way I had dragged in the *alcalde*, as I had not the faintest idea whether such a functionary existed in the place or not. My sheet-

anchor was in reality the schoolmaster, who had promised to call upon me in the morning. But *alcalde* sounded legal and formal, and I felt sure that the word had vanquished Marcos utterly.

Eduardo knocked very early in the morning, and brought in a large red jar of soft water and some nice towels sent by the worthy schoolmaster. The lad looked at me as if something was to be said, but I resolutely held my peace. Had I not heard voices in confabulation under the verandah?

"Go and find out, Eduardo, where the office of the *alcalde* is," I said at length; "we cannot start till I have seen him."

"Señora, the mules are saddled, and we are going to take our coffee,—and—Señora, Marcos would like to speak to you — now — Señora; it was the *aguardiente.*"

"Let Marcos come in at once," I replied, throwing my large shawl over me, and looking as if I had never heard of the man in my life.

Marcos came to me. "Oh, Señora, do not mind the foolish words I said last night," the

muleteer exclaimed, looking quite subdued; "it was all a mistake. I am ready to go. The mules are saddled. Señora, I will take care of you, and see that you cross the Juan."

"Very well, Marcos," I answered, "you can do as you please, and I want to start early. Go and get your breakfast now, like a good fellow (*buen hombre*). I am sure you will take me across the river safely."

This time the man went out with a laugh, and I laughed in my sleeve, thankful to have escaped the necessity of consulting the *alcalde*, and all the annoyances which the interview would have surely entailed.

We were soon on our way, led out for a short distance by the courteous schoolmaster. He had heard from Eduardo, it appeared, all the particulars of the little skirmish with Marcos, and he congratulated me on my victory.

"The men tell me you are a brave little lady," said he.

"I ought to be. I am the daughter and the sister of two brave men who fought and died for their country."

"God rest them! Go you with God." This was the schoolmaster's farewell.

Fairly now on the trot, our object was to cross the river Juan before night, as reports from various persons had agreed as to its being much swollen by recent rain, and that its condition was not favourable for passing over. We therefore travelled fast, hardly waiting to take food. After a few hours we found ourselves on the banks of a wide river, in company with some Indian women who were filling their water-jars at the stream.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE was the river Juan. As the true Portuguese speaks of the Tagus as "El Señor Tajo" (the Lord Tagus), so do the Hondureians, in another form of speech, accord the greatest dignity to the river Juan, although it is not, by any means, the most important stream of the country. "El hermoso! el rey de los rios de las Honduras" (the beautiful! the king of the rivers of Honduras). Mr Stephens, in his 'Central America,' alludes to this river as the "tortuous river Juan." Well, there it was,—broad, turbulent, almost defiant. I felt that this love of the Hondureians was likely to be too much for me, as, on looking across, I discerned what might be a low hurdle of rocks, standing almost in its centre, very irregular in

form, and literally showing their teeth, for they were jagged almost to a point.

The water leapt and swirled over and about these in all directions. The very sound was a laugh aimed against us, and the solemn dark trees which bordered the side were very far from being an enlivening feature in the prospect. The sun had become overcast, and the only colour in the scene was the strip of yellow path down which we had wound, our noble selves, and the crimson handkerchiefs on the heads of two Indian women, who were squatting on the river's edge watching their naked children, busy making "mud pastry," much after the fashion of the small people whose dwellings are on the banks of the Lea, Trent, or Thames.

A cross macaw, whose frequent and discordant screech fell on my ear like a "jeer in the voice," was evidently secreted somewhere.

"Here you are; the river is very much swollen, you'll perceive, there is no ford, and you will have to pass over how you can. Ya—ah!" Thus croaked the bird; and the

human voice of Marcos was of still more dreary portent, as he exclaimed to his comrade, "No hay vado; y mas, no hay canoa" (no ford; and worse, no canoe). Eduardo remained silent, and walked to and fro, looking at the water as if he had a personal quarrel with everything around, and with it in particular. At length I said, "There ought to be a canoe here; where, I wonder, is the man who owns it?"

A shrug of the shoulder and a flourish was the only reply, and then Marcos solved the difficulty with the usual Hondureian platonism, "No hay remedio" (there is no remedy). The action that accompanied these words further intimated—"There is nothing for it but sink or swim: the river must be crossed, ford or no ford, and the sooner we go the better." Obviously there was no remedy; and the men turned their drawers up to their knees, folded their jackets on their heads, and prepared to walk into the water. The elder of the two Indian women now came towards me. Placing one small brown hand on the mule's neck, and

almost caressing my knee with the other, as I sat humped up to keep clear of being wet, she said, "Es muy peligroso, señora, muy peligroso; no anda" (it is very dangerous, lady; do not go).

I knew instinctively, and as well as she did, that it was very dangerous; but what could be done? And I turned to Marcos with this inquiry.

The man replied in his usual incisive and somewhat peremptory tones, "We must cross at once, Eduardo, and I will go first; he will lead the baggage-mule, and I will follow on the *macho*. When Luisa sees the *macho* well into the water, the creature will follow at once. Now stick on hard" (this being expressed as "apargate muy fuerte"). With this admonition he seized the hem of my dress, and began to roll it up in a rough fashion, to prevent it being immersed in the water.

The Indian interposed: "Let me do that for the lady,—you must not touch her in that manner;" and pushing Marcos aside she arranged my garments most comfortably. Then

she said, with oh! such pathos in her voice, "The river is so strong—it is very dangerous. You *will* go; but 'ay di mi,' you have much courage."

Much courage! Had she felt my throbbing pulse; could she but know, kind soul, the struggle that was going on in my proud English heart not to appear to be afraid! True, my words were measured, and I smiled because I felt I must not give way one inch; but if this were courage, it was merely the desperation of "no hay remedio": nothing more nor less.

The men, meanwhile, had driven their beasts into the water. The mules here went straight enough; and having got them safely to their work, Marcos turned round and hailed to me to follow close on. I patted the woman on the shoulder, saying as I did so, "Adieu, good friend—all will be well," and gathered up the reins to ride away. Luisa, however, would not move, and as I urged her towards the water, she trembled so violently as to shake me perceptibly where I sat. The touch of the

switch and all my adjurations, sole and combined, here fell unregarded on mind and matter. Luisa would not stir, but gathered her four hoofs as close as she could beneath her, and stuck them in the muddy soil. The fact that this high-couraged and gentle creature continued to tremble, and appeared to be paralysed with terror, scattered all my resolution, and I turned myself half round to avoid the sight of the water.

The Indian woman now darted towards me with a cry, followed by her companion, and raising her arms in the air. "La muleta no se va. Señora, por amor de Dios no anda!" (The mule won't go. Lady, for the love of God remain!)

Whatever I might have done it is impossible even to conjecture, for the mule had taken all power of action out of my governance. She still stood like a rock, looking sideways now and then at the water, and shaking with fear.

Marcos had turned round, and evidently understood the position. Coming back to within speaking distance, he shouted—"Stay where

you are; Eduardo and I will get to the other side, and then return for you." So they went; and as they swayed from right to left, and in their course across described a semicircle, it was plainly to be seen that the current was very strong. It was a regular buffet for a while. At last we saw that the men had landed safely, and soon I espied the *macho* tied to a tree exactly opposite to where we were standing for the especial benefit of Luisa. A few shakings and a little further undressing, and then the guides came across for me.

As they neared the shore, I took up the tremble which Luisa had at this juncture discarded; but I managed to appear calm, and to thank the Indian women for their companionship, giving them at the same time a *peseta* (English shilling) to remember me by. The elder kissed my hand; and in that glorious language in which the Emperor Charles V. is accredited to have said we should pray to God, she took her farewell—leaving me to God. "Be not afraid, dear one" (her words may be interpreted); "the good Father will take

you over the river—the Father whose love will grant you many years. Go with Him. Adios."

The love of the Father! Ah! fellow-men and fellow-women, do we not somewhat and sometimes, in our worship of the Son and in our veneration of His Mother, totally pass over the love of the Father? I repeated the Indian's words, and I am not ashamed to add that I learned a lesson from them.

The strong hand of Marcos was now on the rein, Eduardo was ordered to the off side, and the mule and her burden were dragged forwards into the stream with but scant ceremony. Soon the might of the waters fell on us, together with the swirl and the swim of the rushing current, as we neared the centre of the river. Luisa stumbles on a stone, the men prop her up lustily; but the mad racing of the current makes me blind and dizzy, for more than once we are half turned round; so I clutch the muleteer's head in answer to his injunction of *apargate bien*, and feel sure that this water is to be my last bed. However, Luisa bears up, and seems to have

lost her fears, thanks to the supporters which gave the animal confidence; and this in its turn, in some magnetic force, rouses me to exertion, and I hook my knee against the pommel of the saddle, and sit as firmly as I can in obedience to the reiterated command of *apargate bien!* Luisa staggered here and there, and at one time it seemed as if we must be swept away. We had not described a large enough circle, it appeared, when passing the middle rocks. There was a prolonged struggle on our part, stimulated on the mule's part by a terrific bray from the *macho*. In a few moments his bosom friend, with her legitimate rider on her back, was hauled safely to land.

A gasp and a sob, and I stood between the men, as they dismounted me. My boots were like soaked sponge; and the smell of wet leather was the pungent odour which recalled me to my clear sense. We looked across the water, to see the Indian women with their children grouped around them, looking eagerly towards us. One of them raised her arm, and pointed upwards. Then every one of them

waved their hands, and turned swiftly up the path. Kind, simple people, I shall never see them again! May the love of the Father keep them ever from harm!

"We have passed a great peril, Señora," said Eduardo, after a few moments' silence, as he made the "holy sign." The men both bowed their heads reverently, and I think we all thanked the Lord in sincerity and truth. I, however, could not help shuddering as I looked at the river; and to get rid of the feeling, I took to walking up and down, telling the men that I was very cold. We had nothing with us, save a few *tortillas,* which the men ate as they rubbed the mules and arranged their furniture. Fortunately the baggage-mule had come off better than any of us. This was owing to the perfect manner in which she had been loaded, and also from her being a very tall animal.

"You must mount quickly, for the sun will soon be down," said Marcos; "we shall scarcely have time to get to Narango."

A little delay to arrange our own toilets, and we were on the route again, the beasts and

their riders being none the worse for their bath.

Marcos had soon returned to his usual equanimity, and, as usual, he "improved the occasion" to his own benefit.

"Señora," said he, as we rode along, "we both got very wet, both Eduardo and I, in the river, and you have nothing here to give us. There is very good beer in Comayagua; when we arrive there, will you give us a bottle of beer for getting you over the Juan? It is a proud thing to have forded the Juan; that is worth a large bottle of beer, Señora."

"Oh yes, yes," I replied hastily, vexed at his cupidity, and not being inclined to talk. "You shall have the beer when we get to Comayagua." It was a rash promise, for a bottle of beer in Comayagua costs four shillings!

It was some time before we could find accommodation, however humble; and it was only by taking a side path and riding into the interior that we could discover a single dwelling. At length a thatched farm-looking dwelling of the poorest description, but prettily situated on a

rising knoll, came in view; and with some trepidation we inquired if we could be sheltered for the night. A pleasant-looking young woman came out, followed by some fine children and two lean dogs.

"My husband is over the mountain," she replied, in answer to our inquiries: "if the lady can put up with me and the children, we shall be proud to receive you. Here, Vicente!"

The individual so hailed was a wonderfully handsome boy, more Spanish than Indian. Without a word he began to unload the mules, and by this act he secured the goodwill of my attendants at once.

"Come into the kitchen, lady," said my hostess; "oh, how damp your clothes are! There is a good fire there, for I have been cleaning up since the man went away."

She led the way to a building a little apart from the principal part of the house. It was only an erection of baked mud and sticks, but there was a bright wood-fire burning on one side, and a kind of oven in the centre. The woman brought out the only chair, and then

knelt down to help to draw off my boots, which were really little better than pulp.

"If you will send the younger of my guides with the little *maleta* (portmanteau), I shall be very much obliged to you," I said; "and can you give me something to eat soon?"

"Yes; I will kill a fowl for you, Señora: for the men there is dried venison (my husband hunted it last year) and *tortillas*. I can let you have some light wine, if you would think it good enough."

"Thank you, but I would rather have some coffee."

"You shall have it, Señora. Now you dress here, and I will go and catch the fowl."

In a few minutes Vicente poked my portmanteau into the room, and on looking about I found a jar of water; and so, with a little management, I made a decent, and certainly a much more respectable appearance than before.

Whilst the fowl was cooking, I strolled into a kind of orchard, where there was a round table and a seat. This, I found, Eduardo had placed for me, he knowing by this time how much I

hated the usual household smells of these parts. A small kerosene lamp was brought also, for it was beginning to get dark; and when the meal appeared (the fowl stewed in rice), I ate with such a relish, that I am afraid the two lean dogs must have looked upon me at the time as a very hopeless addition to the household. I should add, however, that they *did* get the remains of this feast.

The night was fairly comfortable, and it was with a feeling of gratitude that I wished the hostess good-bye. "I would not accept any pay, Señora," the simple creature said; "but we are so poor, and we have so many children to feed."

We inquired about our way to Comayagua, and she told us that we ought to arrive there the day after at farthest. "Go to the Posada Victorine," said she; "it is a good place, and Madame Victorine will make you comfortable. Ah! she has got money, has Madame Victorine."

I was glad to hear of a comfortable, decent place, as I was anxious to remain a day or

COMAYAGUA.

two at Comayagua, in order to refresh the whole party. Eduardo, too, was anxious to see his friends who lived there; and as he was to go on with me to San Pedro Sula, it was but natural that a day or two's halt would be especially pleasing to him. Marcos was totally indifferent on the matter.

Our march being now entirely in the low-lands, the heat had become most oppressive, and to travel in the middle of the day was a risk to health and strength. The mules, too, were showing signs of fatigue, and grass and water were beginning to fail, and had become very inferior in quality. It was therefore imperative to get quickly into Comayagua.

It was a joyous sight, when, between rich ilex trees, we saw the walls and fluted tile roofs of the ancient capital of Spanish Honduras. The city is picturesquely built, but its silent, grass-grown streets, its air of poverty, and the absence of busy stirring life, all announce that its glory has departed. There is consequently much jealousy of Tegucigalpa,

the present capital, wherein the President, Dr Soto, now dwells.

It was about noon when we wound in from some pretty country by a circular path, and arrived baked and weary at Madame Victorine's *posada*. The great heavy gates were closed, and a bell, ponderous enough for a cathedral, clanged the intelligence that strangers were waiting without. A *mozo* came out, looked at us, speedily shut the gate, and vanished.

In a few moments a plump, nice-looking woman came through the gates, her head covered with a pocket-handkerchief. "Entrez, descendez, Madame; descendez vite, je vous prie. Le dîner nous attend. Ah, ma foi, le soleil vous a mal traité! Mais entrez." So saying, she nearly pulled me off my mule, and took me through the court-yard into the house.

A younger woman was seated at a table upon which the noonday dinner was spread. She gave me kindly welcome, and told me not to talk, but to sit down and eat. "I have

looked at you through the little window in the court-yard," she added, with the utmost frankness; "you are going to stay, so eat now, and take a *siesta* afterwards."

There were stewed pigeons, I remember, and some macaroni before me, but I could not eat; I only felt a longing to lie down on the floor. The elder woman was equal to the occasion. She went to a cupboard and brought out a bottle of cognac. "That is what you want," said she in the French language; "drink of it—it is quite pure; you have been too long in the sun." So speaking, she thrust a tall, narrow glass of brandy-and-water into my hand, and stood over me like an amateur policeman till I had swallowed its contents.

"Now, eat of the pigeon; don't refuse; you will be drunk, and that would be shocking, you know," continued she, with a humorous twinkle of the eye; "shock-ing, eh, my friend?"

I laughed, for the remedy had already "fetched up" my spirits; and I found shortly that both pigeon and rice-pudding were, after my late experiences, very luxurious fare.

Some hours after we were again seated together, and then Madame Victorine informed me that she and her sister were going away to France in ten days, and that the establishment was in some confusion, because they were packing up, and preparing to make over the concern to a manager, who was to act for her for a year.

"So you are welcome to stay for a day or two; but I cannot treat you well. We are killing the old poultry and pigeons now," continued Madame, "and there are not many provisions of any kind in the house."

I hastened to assure her that one day would do; but she insisted upon my remaining two days. "Eduardo is with his friends, and Marcos is at a muleteer's *posada*. The mules are in my stable; they cannot be turned out here. Now, come into the verandah, and we will take our coffee there," said she.

"I think," said the sister, whose name was Mathilde, "you are the lady who is going to San Pedro Sula; indeed our *mozo* learned this from your guides. Do you know the doctor?"

"Not personally, only in the way of business," I replied. I thought I saw a look of intelligence pass between the sisters, but it was so slight that I was perhaps mistaken. Then the elder said: "You promised the men some beer, did you not, after crossing the Juan? The muleteer has been twice here asking for it, but I would not have you disturbed, and he will come this evening."

"Trust Marcos for forgetting to claim anything that will save his own pocket," I thought; and then added aloud, "Can you supply me with some, and allow me to settle with you?"

"My stores are quite exhausted, but when the man returns I will give him some of my best wine. I am the only importer of good beer in Comayagua, but your guides will be only too glad to get wine. I will see the man, and you can pay me for the wine. Do not let the muleteer purchase it; he will make you pay a fine price."

A bath and a clean bed quite restored me, and I was able to go out and look about. The fine old church is in bad preservation, and the

bells, which are said to be made of silver, give forth anything but a musical sound. The edifice was, however, clean, and it contained some curious relics. On my return I found Eduardo waiting to see me.

"I thought," said Madame, "that you would like to pay your respects to the Bishop. The palace is close by; send the *mozo* with your compliments, and inquire at what time his lordship will receive you."

Eduardo was despatched, and returned with a message to the effect that the Bishop would gladly receive me at four in the afternoon. At that hour Eduardo attended me to the palace, which was enclosed within a high wall, and entered by a plain handsome gate. This opened on a court which was surrounded by a garden. The centre part of the garden was laid out in parterres, intersected by low cane fences. These were interwoven and nearly hidden by large masses of convolvuli in luxuriant flower,—blue, striped, white, pink, and the loveliest of all, the pure white bell, with a touch of mauve colour in the depths of its corolla. These spread them-

selves in all directions, and a little clipping here and training there would have been an improvement. A splendid specimen of the date-palm—a tree which seems to be honoured above its fellows in all parts—grew at each corner of the plot, and afforded plentiful shade. The court was open to the sky, and a widely paved portico ran round it: on this opened the doors of the several rooms occupied by the establishment. The roofing of these was composed of the usual red tiles, fluted in wavy form,—the common covering of Hondurean houses. The building was of one storey, the better to be able to withstand a shock of earthquake.

A youth, in resemblance something between an acolyte and a gentleman usher, admitted us. This official wore black knee-breeches, and black silk stockings, which were partially hidden by a black silk gown—his robe of office probably. He was bareheaded, and his hair, which was raven black, seemed to grow from the top of the scalp only, and hung straight downwards like a large tassel. He reminded me of a Christ's Hospital boy who had been

dyed. This young gentleman's face lacked refinement somewhat, but his manner was very courteous without being in the least servile.

"You are more than welcome," he said; "El Señor Obispo [the Lord Bishop] is always so glad to receive strangers, and a lady from England is a rare visitor indeed. You are the first of that nation that I have seen, for I have never been out of Comayagua."

He passed before us, and ushered me into a room which seemed to serve as a place of waiting for visitors to the palace, and others who could not be left standing in the outer court. The furniture of this apartment was very simple; but some beautifully woven matting covered the floor. The book-shelves contained works of devotion principally, and on a side table stood a stereoscope, a French newspaper, and some photographs. I think the only picture here was a very fine engraving of the Cathedral of Leon in Old Spain. A rocking-chair stood out comfortably near the door; and a bunch of lovely

oleander-blossoms was lying upon it, just giving a touch of colour to the cool tones of the surroundings.

A few minutes elapsed, and the attendant reappeared to take me into the Bishop's presence. Eduardo came forward and made as if he would like to accompany me; but he was waived back, and told to wait till the Señora should summon him.

We crossed to the opposite side of the court, and I was shown into a large cool apartment, which was very sparsely and poorly furnished. A few pictures covered with glass were its only decorations. Shortly afterwards a tall spare man entered the room, vested in the dress of a dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church. This was the Bishop of Comayagua—a man of gentle manner and peace-loving disposition, but now bowed down with years, and a sufferer, like many other unoffending persons, from the ruin which successive revolutions had wrought upon the country.

The first salutations ended, the Bishop congratulated me on being an inmate of Madame

Victorine's establishment, and then inquired if I was going far?

I replied, "I am on my way, my lord, to San Pedro Sula,"—then seeing that this information only caused a look of surprise, I continued: "I wrote to your lordship announcing my intention of going to San Pedro Sula, on the Doctor's invitation, to superintend his school there."

"I never received that letter. He has never either personally or otherwise mentioned the subject to me."

"Perhaps your lordship will kindly inform me whether the doctor had obtained your sanction to open a school for the colonists; and also, whether he was authorised by either yourself or the Government to select the teacher."

"Señora, I never heard of the proposition."

"But surely you are aware, my lord, that in the pamphlet published, and, as I believe, sanctioned by the Government, your signature appears to a document which tells the world that you heartily approve of all that this person is doing for the education of the colonists, and

you further pledge yourself to support him as much as you can."

"That is true in a general sense; and eighteen months ago, every one of the undertakings with regard to the immigrants seemed in a prosperous state. But things have changed, lamentably changed."

"Why, my lord, what is the reason of this change? I have the letter, written to me at Sydney, a very short time ago, which gives a very prosperous account of the settlement."

The Bishop moved uneasily, and said something about some persons being possessed of a sanguine temperament.

"It is true, is it not, that the Government of Honduras gave a grant of land some time ago for the express purpose of building a school-room? Moreover, the Doctor is written of as being a personal friend of Dr Soto, the present President," I affirmed decisively.

"You are right. Dr Soto was very ready, when the colony was first settled, to afford the promoter every encouragement. He looked upon his efforts in introducing labour as a very

great step for the improvement of the whole country; but I believe there is a diminution in their personal friendship. This," continued his lordship, "is what I hear; I do not state this last on my own authority."

"Has the Doctor influence to secure me a plantation; or does the assignment rest entirely with the Government?" I asked.

"The assignment of land is entirely in the hands of the Government, and the concessions made are generally very liberal. There is plenty of land to be had, but care should be taken in selecting it," replied the Bishop.

"I should so like to have a place of my own," I replied. "I am fond of teaching; but it is not pleasant to live in other people's houses, generally speaking. To make a home of my own was the chief reason that induced me to come to Honduras."

"You can, I assure you, be very useful," said the Bishop, with more warmth of manner; "the mothers in the country are very anxious to have their children educated. You might easily find private pupils, should you prefer this."

"At present, my lord, I consider myself under engagement to the person who wrote to me; I am only sorry that I set out without hearing from you."

"Will you have any objection to tell me what position he offered you, and also what salary?"

"In answer to my letter saying that I must secure pupils, or even boarders, if I took up land in Honduras, in order to pay the first expenses, he wrote that he would immediately make me teacher of the colonists' school at a moderate salary—the amount was not given; and further, that I could increase my means by playing the organ in his church."

At this the Bishop stared, but said nothing. He might well be dumfounded; for I found, on arriving at San Pedro Sula, that neither organ nor any other instrument of music had been seen in the church since it was built long years ago.

The Bishop might have given the Doctor the credit of having lately introduced that "modern innovation," the harmonium, into the church.

This, of course, I have no means of knowing, as the old gentleman persevered in the utmost reticence, and he did not give utterance to any speculative opinions. He looked down, and then suddenly raised his head with the inquiry, "Have you sent any money on to the Doctor?"

"No, my lord; I am expending money enough in travelling so far."

"True." And as if anxious to change the subject, the Bishop spoke of her Majesty the Queen of England. "We, as Catholics," said the gentle old man, "were so touched to hear of the sympathy shown by Queen Victoria to the ex-Empress of the French on the death of her son. Ah, ah!" continued he, "the old stay, and the young are taken away. Your royal family loved the poor young lad, and they did the kindest thing of all—they attended him to his grave! *Ay di mi!* But your Queen makes no difference between Catholic and Protestant in her friends; she treated the Imperial Prince with noble kindness. I have prayed for her: she has a large heart."

After some observations about the Ritualist

party in England, in which he seemed to take an intelligent interest, the Bishop rose. He passed with me to the threshold, pointing out one or two pictures as he did so. These were very old, and represented portraits of remarkable ugliness. Then the old man gave me his blessing, and I was again standing in the outer court.

CHAPTER X.

"WELL, Señora, how do you like our Bishop?" was Eduardo's eager inquiry, as the portal of the palace was closed against us. "Is he not good and gentle?"

"I like the Bishop very much, Eduardo; but I think he appears to be rather old for his important position."

"He wants money, like all in Honduras. The revolutions and the Honduras railway have taken all the money. I am glad, Señora, however, that the failure of the railway was caused by British mismanagement, and not by ours. My father lost much by it, and they say that the Bishop held a great many shares in that railway."

The Honduras railway had been so often flung in my face whenever the subject of honesty had

happened to come under discussion, that I always changed the conversation as soon as possible. This time I said, "Have you seen Marcos?"

"Yes, Señora; and he tells me that he has heard in Comayagua that you are a relative of the Doctor at San Pedro Sula. Is that true, Señora?"

"Certainly not: I never saw the man in my life. Tell Marcos this. I suppose he is living with the gossips of the town, who invent news for want of something to talk about."

We found Madame anxiously awaiting our return; and as I entered she darted forwards and exclaimed, "Ah! the Bishop has told you all about the Doctor; ah! indeed he must have said a great deal about him. Do tell me, Señora, —I am interested for you, although I have not spoken. I suppose his lordship told you much, eh?"

"On the contrary, his lordship said very little. That which renders me now very uncomfortable, is what the Bishop did *not* say," I replied sadly.

"Ah!" replied Madame, speaking as fast as possible, in the French tongue, "he must have the prudence, the caution; you know so little, and perhaps he thought that I was wise, and had not informed you much. Did his lordship ask you of me?"

"I told him that I was in your house; he said you were a kind-hearted woman."

"Ah! no more: well he did not tell you, and it is possible that it would be of much difficulty to state the things in a foreign tongue. His lordship not altogether comprehend you; and, on the other side, you not quite understand him. Is it not?"

This was more than likely, and would account very strongly for the Bishop's reticence; so I replied, "I am afraid the Bishop did not quite make out my Spanish here and there."

"Very possibly, yet you do well—fairly well. Confide to me; the Bishop, did he not tell you one thing about the Doctor?"

"Only that the colony was not nearly so prosperous as it was at first, and that things are changed. His lordship either could not or

would not say wherefore. One thing," I continued, "the Bishop did assert, and that was that your President, Dr Soto, is by no means satisfied with the Doctor, and seemed to infer that he (Dr Soto) is not friendly with him."

"Ah! how could he be? But I won't say more. I don't want to gossip about the man in my house; and perhaps after all, Señora—after all, he may not be so bad. I don't know him," she answered.

"I wish you would tell me honestly what you have heard about him, or what is your reason for saying he may not be so very bad."

"Well, it is for yourself to judge how to act. He is no longer a priest of the diocese of Honduras. That is what the rumour is. Myself, I do not know; but if this is true, the Bishop would have said. Eh?"

"His lordship certainly ought to have done so," I replied, greatly startled at this news; "but why is he no longer a priest of the diocese?"

"Ah! that I cannot say. The Bishop was obliged to suspend him, because the petition from the people of San Pedro Sula was so strong that his lordship could not act otherwise. You see?"

"No, I don't see. If he be suspended, he would hardly be living at San Pedro now."

"Oh! that is the difficulty. The church is locked up; there is no one officiating. I tell you what; you turn your mule's head and go back, that is my advice."

"I cannot; I have not money enough," I answered. "My expenses are all paid or provided for to San Pedro. The men's agreements are signed for that. If things do not suit, I will get private pupils, and return to England as soon as I can."

"That will cost money," said Madame.

"Yes; I shall have to wait till I can get funds sent from England to bring me away. But I will not think that things are so bad: the Doctor's suspension may be only temporary. If otherwise, he would never have written and engaged me to come to Honduras."

"I think he must have got into trouble after he had written to you to come. That is very likely. You have not put any money into his hands, have you?"

"Not any; I expect him to put money into mine," I answered with a laugh.

"Oh! I am glad he has not any of your money," said the kind-hearted Frenchwoman.

Thus, between Madame's knowing and not knowing, added to the reticence of the Bishop, I had learned enough to make me very uncomfortable. I resolved, however, to act in a straightforward manner, and so I said to Madame, "There is a telegraph line between Comayagua and San Pedro Sula, is there not?"

"Certainly—not very good; it breaks often, but it does work. Do you want to send a telegram?"

"Yes; I shall telegraph to the Doctor to announce that I am setting off for San Pedro, and to request him either to meet me there, or send some one to represent him."

"Good—very good; write the telegram in

Spanish. Stay—I will do so for you; I have more experience: and let me add that you request an answer."

"There will be scarcely time, I think; but, at any rate, he will have to prepare to receive me. There is nothing for it now but to make the best of the situation, and try and shake off evil impressions."

With this resolution I buried myself in the depths of a wide clean hammock, and rocked away "dull care" till the call for supper came.

The lively chat at Madame's table served for a while at least to dispel a tendency to a despondent state of mind, and after supper I was too busy in making preparations for the onward march to dwell upon what I had heard; and so night drew on, and in the early morning afterwards I was fresh, and willing to continue the journey to San Pedro Sula.

"One word more I have to say to you," said Madame, as she stood with her sister in the courtyard looking at the preparations for departure. "You may remain at San Pedro, or you may find it wiser to leave it. Now Mr De Brot,

the consul at Puerto Cortez, is an honourable, kind man, and he does banking business. You write to him; he will know how to get your money from England; but, dear lady, do not allow any one but him to have anything to do with business of any kind for you, whether you go or stay. I mean money business," she continued, with a knowing waggle of her head.

"Now I must transact my own little business with you," I said. "Let me know what I am indebted to you for my board and lodging."

"Ah! bah! nonsense!" returned Madame. "You pay! No, indeed, you won't; I am too glad to see a lady. You can settle for the mules in the stable; but for entertainment in my house,—no,—never—never. See, too, we are going away; you have taken only the remnants of food — old pigeons, end of this, scrap of that; no,—such is not my usual table for strangers."

So I settled a very modest score for the stabling of the mules, and then Madame informed me that she and her sister would be

a night in San Pedro Sula very shortly, on their way to Puerto Cortez, from whence they were to sail to New York. "We shall meet again," said Madame Victorine, "so I shall only say *au revoir*."

We issued out at the great portal of the shady court into a blazing sun, but we were all refreshed and comforted by our rest; and Luisa was so frisky that it was difficult to hold her in. I gave my grateful thanks to both of the ladies for their hospitality; and the last words I heard from the Posada Victorine were the stringent tones of Madame repeating her injunctions as to caution.

The *macho* was so wild that he and Eduardo were sent on first, and enjoined to keep out of Luisa's sight, as that animal seemed very much inclined to "bolt"; for she persistently imitated her mate in all his ways, good or evil, and he evidently had come into the world as a racing character. Marcos placed the staid baggage-mule in front of Luisa, and at a quick trot we passed on our way.

Madame Victorine had put down on paper

the names of the places wherein it would be best to stop. We had left the grand scenery here, but still we passed through some fine country very badly cultivated. At this point my journal runs: "Halted for a few moments, fifteen miles from Comayagua, at the house of Don Somebody Navarro,—a sickly man, who hospitably gave me some milk and bread. This Señor is reputed rich, but his surroundings are most miserable. He spoke English, having lived in Cuba. The men got provisions in the village, so our store is ample.

"Crossed rather a dangerous but narrow river in the afternoon. I managed the mule pretty fairly and without help: in consequence, Marcos condescended to inform me that I was much improved in my riding. The fact is that Luisa is getting to know me, and the kindly beast does her best to travel gently. Arrived at a place called 'Quevos.' Here we spent the night; and the house which we had selected was quiet and respectable. It was kept by a poor widow, and it was the cleanest house I had seen. In the evening the woman asked

me if I would object to joining in the evening prayer?

"'Object!' I replied; 'I am only too glad to join with Christians in His praise and His worship.'

"She told me that the revolution had swept away the church of the village. The late *cura* of the parish was dead, and there was no money to pay another, as the present Government refused all aid. 'So,' said she, 'a few of us join in the morning and evening prayer. We will not live like heathens.' The room was carefully swept out, and shortly afterwards about a dozen persons of both sexes entered the room, and dropped on their knees. A curtain was drawn aside, and displayed a small altar on which stood a cross, and before it a little vase filled with lovely flowers. A few prayers were said, and a hymn was sung, and then all silently departed. It was a simple heartfelt service; truly that of the two or three gathered together in Christ's name."

This from my journal, July 25:—

"A long ride was before us on the follow-

ing morning, as we were anxious to cross the river Blanco by daylight; and I was told that the stream, though very narrow at the crossing-point, was dangerous on account of a peculiarly rapid under-current, which it required some dexterity to fight against. It was a comfort to hear, however, that a canoe was always on the side of this stream. It was arranged that we should sleep at Santa Yzabel after crossing the Rio Blanco (White River). The Rio Blanco here is little more than a narrow and deep strait reputed to be very dangerous. An Indian sits all day in a canoe, to be ready to convey passengers and their baggage to the opposite side.

"The mules and cattle are sent into the stream, and they swim to shore: the bath is very refreshing to them, as they get but scanty attention, generally speaking, in the matter of cleansing. However, it is looked upon as a great nuisance to have to take all the baggage from off the sumpter-mule and the saddles from the others, only to replace all, twenty minutes later, on the opposite side.

"The crossing-place at this point is very

picturesque, the bank rising to a mound on one side of the path, whereon the interlaced branches of two magnificent tamarind-trees threw their arms far over the water. The lovely crimson creeper, *Prendas de Amor* (Links of Love), carpeted the ground in great profusion. This creeper has no perfume; but it is an error to suppose that all the wild flowers in these countries are scentless. At this spot, too, the grass was unusually soft and green; and at the root of the trees grew a cream-coloured flower, bearing a violet eye, the name of which it was impossible to discover.

"Save the quinine-tree, I had never been able to ascertain the name of any shrub or flower, from either Eduardo or Marcos. The former sometimes characterised a bird, and he was always on the alert to gather any edible fruit that might show itself from out of the hedge or thick-growing foliage.

"Now, crossing the river Blanco is to be undertaken, and remembering my experience of the Juan, I look upon the canoe and the Indian with the utmost satisfaction. Two

Spanish herdsmen with a flock of superb cattle, a peasant with his wife and mule, and lastly, a long string of charcoal-laden mules, attended by their drivers, had convened here from other directions, and waited to cross the stream. One boatman and one canoe for the work! It was lucky that the great proportion of this assemblage could be independent of the Indian's aid.

"The *personnel* and baggage would cause fetching and carrying enough, and, of course, with so much business on hand, there must be a *convenio* on the matter. So the men got out their *cigarillos*, and we two women, after being dismounted, bowed to each other and exchanged some words, and then looked about for a seat under the tamarind-trees. I had already selected my spot, but Eduardo intervened. 'Not so near the roots, Señora; there may be snake-holes about them. Come farther down here; there is plenty of shade, and the grass is short: there is nothing here wherein a serpent can hide.'"

The trail of the serpent is over it all, then?

But I remembered that these reptiles are in general very fearful of the human proximity, and the most audacious *culebra* would hardly dare to come among so many. There was plenty of shade under the tree, as Eduardo said, far away from the roots; and the longing for rest was strong upon me. No wonder that so it was in such a place, so cool and secluded,—a spot, too, wherein, for a short time at least, we were safe from the bite of insects, and where myriads of butterflies of every shape and form and size served to brighten the scene with gorgeous colour, and add their quota of cheerfulness to the hard work of life, round which they whirled and fluttered. We deserved our rest, for all of us had ridden many leagues.

However, before I seat myself under the friendly tree, I must see that Eduardo unsaddled Luisa properly. This supervision was necessary, as the young fellow had a habit of letting the saddle slip to the ground, pommel downwards. What would become of me should this most useful of projections become damaged or broken off at this stage of the journey? I was feel-

ing weaker, so every risk which would incur discomfort was to be avoided.

The saddle was carried into the shade of a shrub, and then I took my seat and signed to the country-woman to come and sit near me. A little brandy-and-water in the travelling flask and a few *tortillas* were all the fare I had to offer. This I proposed to share with the stranger, to which she readily assented; and on her own behalf she produced some *queso*, and some dried-looking green fruit which was far from inviting. A few slices of roasted plantain rolled up in leaves gave a better turn to affairs, and the final appearance of a bottle of milk was really to this feast *crême de la crême*.

The men meanwhile unloaded the mules, chattering and gesticulating as they did so. The delight of the animals as their packs disappeared was curious to witness, and our usually staid baggage-mule gave expression to her satisfaction by kicking her neighbours right and left, and lashing at everything she could lay heels on.

The first excitement of freedom being over, she rolled on the soft sweet grass, and then

walked in among the charcoal mules and began deliberately to bite and kick at them. A shout from Marcos and a tremendous whack from his stick acted as a deterrent; and with the objurgatory, "Ah, mula redonda!" (O fool of a mule!) our friend was "chivied" up a bank, and made to wait there until her turn for the swim should come. This was well for the human as well as for the animal kind, for a stray blow might have fallen upon some of us; and it is well known that a kick from a mule is far more severe, in degree, than a kick from a horse.

My companion expressed the opinion that the refractory beast had been bitten by the mule-fly, for it was still running about, and rubbing and kicking against the bushes. The agony from the bite of this fly is very great, and in passing through swamps the insect is sure to be lying in wait. It is large in size, and bears some resemblance to the bluebottle-fly; generally it makes its attack near the eye. "I know a little about the matter," continued my informant, "and I assure you a fly will hang about one particular mule for many leagues after its

'habitat' has been passed. A good muleteer always looks out for this pest, and is careful to take it off the animal, for not only does it sting deep, but it also draws a good deal of blood."

We talked and rested for nearly an hour. The Indian who owned the canoe had been invited to land and to partake of the men's rations, and the poor fellow seemed to enjoy most thoroughly the kindness and good companionship which he had fallen in with. The countrywoman told me that her husband bred mules on a ranche in the interior, and that they were on the way to Santa Cruz to receive the money for a sale of animals which he had made to the engineer of the railway works near that town. "They would not stop at Santa Yzabel, as we intended to do," she said, because they had friends in the interior some miles farther on, and they could reach the place before nightfall.

The crossing was effected, but it took a long time, owing to the troublesome current. This was so rapid, that even our audacious friend, the *macho,* refused point-blank to enter the

water, and had finally to be lugged forward by the head, and pushed vigorously from behind, to get him afloat. When fairly in the water, he refused to come out, and amused himself by swimming round the canoe, to the utmost peril of that frail transport. The Indian, agile as a monkey, at a sudden turn leapt on his back; and so, with the help of another man, this wretch was hauled, braying and stamping, to the opposite shore. The observations of Marcos on this occasion are not fit to be recorded to ears polite; but nevertheless, he never laid a finger on the beast.

Was not the *macho* a valuable animal, and was not Marcos expecting to sell him well on the return journey?

All being at length happily managed, we friends of an hour took farewell of each other, and sped on our several ways. A few miles' distance brought my party to Santa Yzabel, which, instead of being a village, as we had expected, was merely a half farm, half hut, lonely dwelling. It was particularly rich in grass, and this delighted Marcos for his mules'

sake. I, on my own part, revelled in the pure milk, in strolling among the cows, and inhaling the air, which here was quite redolent of wild thyme.

The woman of the house was very obliging, but she possessed little wherewith to replenish our commissariat. A tough fowl, and a few *tortillas* which she baked expressly for us, were all that she could procure. The night was wretched, and this had the salutary effect of causing us to strike our tents very early on the following morning. A bowl of milk was my own breakfast, and it was a chance if I could get anything more for many hours.

My journal of July 27, may be admissible here:—

"We rode several miles, and passed some glorious cedar-trees. Here, for the first time, I saw that lovely bird the *Cardinalis rubra*, which is remarkable for being so nervous concerning its own safety as never to build unless it feels itself to be perfectly safe. It will sometimes choose five or six different places before it finishes its nest. The highest and darkest

cedar-tree is its usual habitat, and its song is very peculiar, something between a warble and a whistle. It derives its name from the splendour of the crest, which is of a brilliant scarlet colour, intermixed here and there with a few tips of peacock-green hue. The female has no crest, but she is an elegantly shaped bird.

"It was the peculiar note of this songster that first drew Eduardo's attention to our beautiful neighbour. As the ground was soft, and we had been treading upon a thick layer of fragrant cedar-needles, it was possible that there had not been noise enough to startle the bird. His magnificent crest glanced through the background of dark cedar foliage with great effect. We stopped simultaneously; and Eduardo, stepping up to me, said—'Señora, will you lend me the revolver? I can bring him down.'

"'No, Eduardo, it would be cruelty; besides, the bird would be torn to pieces; don't think of shooting it.'

"'But, Señora, I would like the feathers.'

"'Very well, Eduardo, I can only say, if you shoot that bird, I will not give you the revolver,

as I had intended to do, when we arrive at San Pedro Sula.'"

This settled the matter, and Eduardo returned the little case to the canvas bag from which he had half withdrawn it.

We had never, as yet, had occasion to use this implement as a weapon of defence, but I had from time to time allowed the lad to discharge it; for, by the generosity of the officer of the Clyde, suitable ammunition had been also supplied with the little case. Eduardo had taught me the use of the weapon, and I had more than once discharged it for practice; but I never was quite happy when handling it, and I rather looked forward to the time when I could safely get rid of it.

Marcos was beginning to be impatient at the delay, and suddenly raised a shout. This had the effect of scaring the birds, one or two of which flew with a shrill cry to some more distant trees. We saw them more perfectly by this means, and thus satisfied, I cared little for being peremptorily hurried on by the muleteer.

My journal goes on to say that we arrived

next at a place called Maniobar. Very pretty, but the inhabitants were holding some races, and this being the case, we could procure neither food nor shelter. These were the most churlish beings we had encountered. Nothing for it but to ride to Coalcar.

In another way Maniobar was remarkable: it was here that we saw a large poisonous snake. The reptile literally crawled between the feet of the baggage-mule; and Luisa, with the instinctive horror which all mules have of snakes, nearly jumped her own height from off the ground. The men drew out their *machetes* quickly; but the reptile was too quick for them, and raising its crest with a hiss, it glided beneath some bushes. This was rather a narrow escape.

The night was particularly wretched; and the place at which we halted was so uninviting, that I proposed, as the moon was full, to travel at night.

The *mozos* evidently feared, as they always had feared, to travel after dusk, so this was negatived. The result was—"I had my hammock

MANIOBAR.

slung outside, and made the best of it. Swarms of mosquitoes, and very little to eat and drink."

The next entry records a far more pleasant experience. "After a weary ride, we arrived at Santa Cruz. This town is built with some regularity, and is far in advance of many that we have passed. We went first to the principal inn, but finding that the proprietor owned a farm-house in the neighbourhood which was on our route, we decided to go there. As Marcos wanted to linger in the town, he readily agreed to go to the farm with me and the mules, if I would grant him and Eduardo leave of absence till nine o'clock in the evening. I agreed to this; and by three o'clock in the afternoon I was left in the hands of a cheery Spanish woman, who was wife of the landlord of the inn at Santa Cruz."

It was a great treat to meet with one of so much refinement as this lady proved to be; and when I had bathed and dined comfortably, I quite enjoyed the walk with her in the cool of the evening. She was the very description of woman which Honduras wanted, and as we sat

in the verandah taking coffee, I could not help telling her so.

"We have had many misfortunes of late years, Señora," she said, "and many bad examples from *those who assume to teach* us progress in commercial transactions. Just look now at that Honduras railway! It might have made the country! Ah, Señora! we have to thank the British people for ruining our trade and commerce for many years to come. Ruin and loss make women hopeless, Señora, and that has been the case in Spanish Honduras. However, we are hoping now for brighter days. America is bringing in both labour and money. Yes, I think better times are coming. God grant it!"

CHAPTER XI.

When the hour came round for starting on the following morning, I, for the first time during this journey, evinced the greatest reluctance to depart; for never had I been so comfortably lodged, or enjoyed so much privacy.

I could not help saying this much to the *padrona*, when she brought me a capital breakfast, nicely laid out on a tray covered with fair linen.

"Put off the start for an hour," said she; "your men are languid this morning, for they made the most of their holiday yesterday, and are disposed to rest. I will take you round the farm; the morning is cool as yet."

We went to the dairy farm, where there were a large number of beautiful cows with their calves, which gave plenty of occupation to four

or five lads and girls, who, though poorly clad, looked healthy and bright. Two young women were busy in the laundry, from whence the clean smell of wood-ashes boiling in a caldron to make the lye announced that linen washed in that establishment would get fair play, and not be bedevilled with chemical soaps and other abominations, the only use of which is to save the necessary hand and arm work of the washerwoman (so called), and destroy the material.

Skirting a small bakehouse, we passed through a gate into the garden. This was only in course of formation, and was evidently the pride of the *padrona*. It was delightful to find sweet-peas and mignonette growing in a nicely laid out border; indeed, in this delicious air and at this elevation, many English flowers would flourish luxuriantly. My hostess possessed a large collection of garden seeds, and she was trying experiments with all in their turn.

Among the deciduous plants, I was shown a pretty flowering shrub called the "Spinarosa." I perceive, by the way, that a perfumery-house

in London is advertising a new scent which bears this name. May all success attend it! for nothing can be more delicate than the fragrance of the Spinarosa flower; and, like pure water, its specific virtue is imperceptible, though perfection is the virtue which characterises it as a whole. The *padrona* had imported two of these shrubs from Guatemala, but I believe the plant is to be found in the Honduras also.

Time will not halt even in Vera Cruz, and soon Marcos hunted me to the garden, with the intimation that I must mount speedily. On returning to the house to complete preparations, I found amongst my effects some cotton print, which I presented to my kind hostess, as it was enough to make a dress for her little girl. I had bought the material, together with some good embroidery, to make a short dressing-gown for myself—so this, fortunately, made the gift a respectable one. As to accepting any remuneration in the shape of money for my entertainment, the kind creature quite repudiated the idea. "She was so happy to receive one with whom she could converse," she said; "and was

I not a 'Soltera'? And why was this? And oh! the world was so hard."

Thus speaking, the *padrona* walked at the mule's head, and led me down through the broken fences which bounded the untidy land outside her domain into a lovely dell, down which sparkled a running stream, babbling musically, and seeming to cast up diamonds of yellow light upon Luisa's hoofs, as she splashed into the centre of its bed. There we parted, with the sisterly kiss of peace, and I carried away with me a very tender memory of Vera Cruz. *Ay di mi!* Vera Cruz; True Cross. May not its signification in part be realised in all the realms of earth, where parting, even with a stranger, gives the heart a pang?

The path became very stony in a couple of hours after leaving the dell, and we pronounced it to be only inferior in disagreeables to a valley of flint, some miles in length, which we traversed after we had long left Comayagua behind us.

Here Luisa was startled by a heifer which plunged out of a hedge on hearing our approach,

and so took me into the depths of a thicket, wherein I lost my veil and the brim of one side of my hat. This loss may appear too insignificant to record; but the effect of this slight accident was, that at night, the skin of the one side of my throat and face was peeled away in strips, and it was some days before the pain quite left me. Such is the strength of the fierce heat of the noonday sun in Honduras.

The penalty of our late start was paid not only by having to suffer great heat, but also by the necessity of rapid travelling. We had literally wandered up hill and down stream. As the evening waned we found ourselves entering upon a large tract of plain, upon which nothing seemed to grow but tall grass of a pale-green colour, and a few distorted shrubs.

What was that in the distance? It appeared like the monument of a woman placed on a high pedestal, and nearer was another which bore the form of a lion couchant. Now we passed a group of enormous boulder-like stones, some of which presented an uncouth and grotesque resemblance to lions and to dogs. Far away on

the plain, detached and scattered, rose up those enormous figures; some without any definable shape, others, again, gigantic and weird-like in the deepening shadow of the evening. I remembered that we had to cross over a bend of the river Palenque, and the thought darted through my mind that these stones might in some way belong to the curious ruins found by Messrs Stephens and Catherwood in their researches through Central America, and at Palenque especially. But so far as I have seen, these stones bear no sculpture, nor do they convey the idea that they have ever belonged to temple or palace, or that they have been connected in one building of any kind.

Presently I halted with the intention to examine a small stone, close to which I passed; but Marcos prevented this, with the strongest determination expressed in the grip of his lean brown hand. "Es un mal lugar" (it is a bad place), said he; "un lugar de los muertos" (a place of the dead). I attempted no more, for the increasing darkness and the silence of my attendants communicated a chill to my own

spirits. The only clear idea in my mind was, that we were not far from Omoa, and Omoa is not many miles away from Copan—the place whereat Mr. Stephens, if I mistake not, met with the most elaborate of the sculptured idols.

My attendants, though they made no sign, were evidently scared. They kept the animals closer together, and we proceeded at a very brisk trot. One of the shapes reminded me so much of the story in the 'Arabian Nights' of the man who was transformed partially into marble, that, in association with the surroundings, I began to wonder if this also were not an Arabian Night's dream.

The rest were a little in front of me, for the path had narrowed, and we were passing on the side of a clump of trees. Suddenly a dark mass, preceded by a rush, fell on Luisa's neck. She nearly jumped her own height from the ground; and I mechanically drew the revolver from the leather pocket which hung at my girdle and fired, throwing the weapon down in a fright at what I had done. The *machetes* of

the two men were in the body of the mass simultaneously, and I learned that I had fired into the tail of what on inspection turned out to be a coyote. A coyote here is said to be the offspring of the dog and the fox. They are dangerous if met with in packs. This turned out to be a half-starved creature, which might have been attracted by some dried venison-meat which was dangling at the saddle of the *macho* mule which Eduardo was leading just in front. To my surprise, Luisa was not in the least restive; the *macho*, on the contrary, made violent attempts to wrench the rein from Eduardo and bolt.

"Now, Señora," said Marcos, as he picked up the revolver, "you must ride quick, very quick; this beast may have a mate. They are seldom alone, and that might be perilous. *Vamos, despacheo*" (Let us go with speed).

We mounted accordingly, Marcos flying ahead with rapid step, and we following at a good pace, till we had left the plain behind us. It was nearly dark when we drew up at the gate of a maize-field, through which Marcos passed; for

he had with his hawk's eye descried the roof of a dwelling jutting out just beyond it.

Riding through the field, we came in front of the building, which was low and covered by an overhanging thatch—this serving evidently as a verandah. The whole place looked so miserable that I urged the guides to ride on, or even to try and reach Potrerillos (our station for San Pedro Sula), as the moon was full, and the road perfectly plain. By this time an old man, followed by his family, came to the edge of a wide trench, which separated the garden and hut from where we waited, and inquired what we wanted.

Marcos told him to put back his three lean dogs, which barked furiously the whole time, and then he would tell him.

A discussion ensued, and the upshot was that we must decide to remain where we were, at least till daybreak.

"It is not safe to go on," the old man said; "the *malagente* (bad people, or robbers) are about in these parts." It was for that reason that he had dug this wide trench before his

garden, and put his dogs to sleep in it at dusk.

Discretion at this juncture was certainly the better part of valour; and the plank which belonged to this excavation being laid across it, we entered the dominions of Señor Juan Masaveo. This individual prided himself upon being a Spaniard of pure race, and told us that he belonged to Catalonia. A cursory glance at the premises convinced me that I had better lie down, as I was, in my hammock; and so this article was swung in the cart-shed, which had been newly thatched. The youngest dog turned out to be a most friendly little beast, and a few scraps which I gave him made him a firm ally; whereupon, an intimacy being established, he laid himself down under the hammock; and I think he was quite equal to making a dash, on my account, upon any intruder who might venture into the shed, or molest me in any way.

At the earliest glint of dawn Eduardo thrust in his face, and announced that there was nothing to eat, and that the mules (which had

certainly been better off) could be ready in an hour.

"We cannot get any milk here, Señora," the lad continued, "until the *vaca* (cow) comes down from her pasture on the hillside."

"When is this *vaca* likely to appear?" I asked. "Does not the woman know?"

The reply was conveyed in that inimitable shrug of the shoulders and flourish of the hand with which the Hondureians answer inquiries and solve difficulties.

"What do these people live on themselves?" I persisted; for I was weak from want of food, and I thought the cow might be as necessary for some of them as for me.

"Oh, raw plantains, dried venison, and a kind of soup made of maize. The men had this before going to work."

"Then there is nothing for us to depend upon but this *vaca*," I said. "Can she not be searched for? I would pay for it."

"She will come when she chooses," replied Eduardo, never making the least attempt or suggestion that he might go and seek the animal

himself. "I have brought you some water, Señora," he continued; "they have a nice well here."

The water was a blessing, and after using it freely, I felt better, and able to start for Potrerillos. The idea of getting away was a tonic in itself.

The men had fallen back upon a few strips of dried venison, but the mules had been fully fed and watered; and I was pleased to find that, by dint of good travelling, we might reach Potrerillos by ten o'clock in the morning.

My host, old and poor as he was, accompanied me over the chasm, mounted me, and walked a short distance at the mule's head. I asked him if he could tell me anything about the stones and the plain we had passed through on the preceding night. He shook his head, and only replied that it was a place of the dead—dead many centuries ago. That was all he knew, he said.

At the parting, on a turn between two slopes, Eduardo handed up the little dog, and the old man literally glowed with pleasure when I put

a *peseta* (10d.) between his paws, and gave him a tender pat. His owner promised to be kind to him for my sake, and then, with the benison, "El buen Dios le guarde mûchos años!" (May God spare you many years!), the old man doffed his cap and went his way.

Ten o'clock found us at Potrerillos, and after making inquiry, we rode up to the house of Monsieur St Laurent, who, it appears, held the position of head-man of the town. This position throughout Honduras is a post very difficult to define or explain; and how the individual occupying it arrives at this dignity, I found it equally impossible to fathom. It depends neither on age, nor talent, nor length of residence in the place. I drew the conclusion, at last, that some one individual possessing a little more energy than usual, combined with some commercial stake in the country, assumed the leadership of the community, and the community fell in with the arrangement as a matter of course, it being a convenience generally, and a saving of trouble to all.

Monsieur St Laurent received us very cour-

teously, but he imparted a piece of information which, for the time being, was highly unsatisfactory to me, and this was that the railway between Potrerillos and San Pedro Sula was quite unserviceable; in fact it had become so broken down that for some months the railway plant had been taken away, and nothing was left but the rails and a broken-down bridge or two. "We have now to ride to San Pedro Sula," said M. St Laurent; "the road is very good, and it is under fifty miles' distance. Rest here, if you like, to-night, and set off at four to-morrow morning; you will then reach San Pedro easily in the afternoon."

But Marcos here intervened. He had been engaged, he said, by contract to take the lady to the railway station at Potrerillos. Well, there was no railway station; further, he was to be paid in the head-house of Potrerillos in the presence of the head-man. Well, there was the head-man; let the lady fulfil her part of the contract and pay him, and let him depart."

In vain did Monsieur St Laurent urge the muleteer to finish the journey, and take me on

to San Pedro. He was obdurate, and even an appeal to his self-interest was, for a wonder, quite superfluous. He had gained as much as he wanted, the man said, and the lady could hire fresh mules here. It was not worth his while to cross the Palenque either; he wished to return quickly, for he hoped to sell the *macho* and the baggage-mule at Vera Cruz. So pronouncing, Marcos drew his copy of our contract from his pocket, and flourished it before Monsieur St Laurent.

For the benefit of those who have not made mule-journeys, I subjoin a copy of this contract, which may prove useful to intending mountain travellers. No one should travel far without being provided with a form of this kind; as it, being stamped with the Government seal, serves as a protection in out-of-the-way places, besides acting as a restriction, if necessary, on the muleteer.

Copy of Contract (*Translation*).

"I, Marcos Carcamo, undertake, to conduct Señora 'Soltera' to the railway station at Potrerillos for San Pedro Sula, charging twelve *pesos*

(crowns) for each one of three mules, and eleven *pesos* for myself as muleteer and confidential man of the said lady,—the whole amounting to forty-seven *pesos*.

"And we both and each agree that this money shall be paid to me by Señora 'Soltera,' in the head-house (for the security of each of us) at Potrerillos at the end of the journey.

"Given at Goascaron, this fourteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-one.

(Signed) "MARCOS CARCAMO.
"MARIA 'SOLTERA,'
"or MARY LONE.

(Stamped)
"Twelve *reales*."

Here follows the receipt.

"I have received the amount of forty-seven *pesos*, as promised above, and I am thoroughly satisfied. MARCOS CARCAMO.

"*Witnesses.*
"EDUARDO ALBAREZ.
"ALFREDO ST LAURENT."

Marcos signed his name in such good hand-writing that M. St Laurent inquired where he had been taught.

"The good priest who was kind to the Indians taught me," he answered. "I knew more some years ago; but now he is dead and gone, I don't care to learn from any one else; besides, I am too old."

He then turned to me, and asked me to furnish him with a certificate testifying to his efficiency as a guide, and also to his having served me with fidelity.

This I did cheerfully, and then he went out with Eduardo, and dismounted the luggage, and took off my saddle from Luisa's back. I came out to wish this tried friend a kind good-bye, and Marcos was so pleased that he said he should tell of the incident in Goascaron. The English lady had kissed his mule!

Doubtless it might be considered a gushing thing to do, but I am not ashamed of the action, and I shall ever feel grateful to this patient intelligent creature for the way in which she carried me—never flagging, never

sulky, and wanting no reward but a handful of bread and salt. Had Marcos been as tender-hearted as she, I might have ridden her to San Pedro Sula. The knowledge of this made my adieus to her owner rather frigid.

"As you oblige me to hire other animals and another guide, Marcos," I said, "I cannot add any present to your pay. Good-bye to you, and take care of Luisa."

Madame St Laurent now joined us, and invited me to come into the private part of her house and take some refreshment. Eduardo was handed over to the *mozo* of the house, and we were both so thankful for our quarters that the question of getting to San Pedro did not for the moment trouble us. I found Madame St Laurent very agreeable and friendly, and she was also a woman of advanced education. Our conversation soon verged round to the gentleman in whom I was so much interested. "Do you know that he is expected here to-day?" she inquired.

"No," I replied; "unless he has come to

meet me, in answer to a telegram I sent him from Comayagua."

"I do not think that is likely; as we hear that he is on the way to Comayagua. He stays at a house in this town when he passes through, and if he arrives to-day, I shall know of it, and will let you know. If he does not appear, it is possible that you may meet him on the road to-morrow."

"Very strange, is it not, that he should be leaving San Pedro just as I enter it?"

Madame smiled, and looked at her husband, and then said—"There has been a great change in the colony during the last few months: several of the colonists have returned home; others have gone to Guatemala; very few remain there now."

"Are you sure of this, Madame?" I asked.

"Quite sure, for many families pass through here, and they speak more or less freely; it seems they have been deceived in many ways. They complained solely of one person; and the only fault they find with the Government is, that it has allowed itself to be hoodwinked by

this man, and is so slow in redressing their wrongs."

"What are these particular wrongs?"

"It is said that when he chartered the vessel to bring these colonists here, he made the majority of them confide their money to him, and that they cannot get a settlement. Then there is a notion abroad that he is no priest, but a former Protestant minister, who came here with questionable recommendations. However, there is no doubt about his suspension, as another priest is appointed to his cure. I am glad of this for your sake, for the new priest is a quiet and earnest man."

"I was told at Comayagua that the person in question does not recognise his sentence of suspension," I answered.

"That is absurd," replied Madame, "for the church is locked up, and the *alcalde* will only give up the key to the newly appointed priest. It is said that his predecessor will never be reinstated. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? It is a great pity, for no one entered upon an undertaking with finer prospects. The Govern-

ment was liberal; the Presbyterian *alcalde* and the Protestant Consul at Puerto Cortez both helped, and were anxious to receive the colonists."

"And these," interposed Monsieur St Laurent, "were mostly of a respectable class of Irish small farmers. They brought a little money, and I think with a different leader they would have done well. Land has been given whereon to build a school, but the school is not even begun."

"What could induce him to write and engage me to come and superintend this school?" I inquired.

Madame laughed. "I cannot say," she said at length; "but I daresay you will get that explained at San Pedro. Now, if you will go and rest, we will see what we can do in getting you mules. I know of one which you can ride, and that is the principal part of the business."

A room like a small barn was assigned to me, and Madame had sent in a bath, water, and towels; and Eduardo having looked to my comforts, asked leave to go with Monsieur St

Laurent's *mozo* to look after a mule for himself and a baggage-mule.

"There is a very good muleteer in Potrerillos just now," the lad said; "he has only been back one day from a long journey; his name is Andreas, and he is well known. I am recommended to apply to him."

I did not meet my kind hosts till sundown, and then Madame knocked and entered with a glass of white wine and a biscuit in her hand. "Will you come and see my garden," said she, "and then take supper with us at eight o'clock?"

This invitation was most acceptable, and the garden was in every respect a pleasant garden, and one which testified most thoroughly to the clever and perfect manner in which the French all over the world utilise space, and ornament unsightly places. The vine and some luxuriant creepers shadowed the deep embrasured windows, and the palisades round the house were painted a cool green, through which the lovely fringe-tree, shortened and pruned, was twisted thickly enough to thoroughly shade the plants

within. A large barrel kept for watering the garden was so deeply shrouded by clematis that it appeared to be literally embedded in a huge white muff. Rows of magnificent balsams, mostly of red and orange colours, were planted regularly on either side of a broad gravel-walk, and here it was that Madame and I walked and talked until supper-time.

At that meal Eduardo waited, and I found that everything was prepared for the start at five o'clock on the morrow. The muleteer, Andreas, was to come with us, and the Palenque river would be crossed in a canoe: the only trouble on the way would be the loading and unloading the animals, and to this we had become accustomed.

Even here the demon of unpunctuality held its sway, and notwithstanding all the efforts of Monsieur St Laurent, it was fully an hour past the appointed time before we started for San Pedro Sula. In spite of the hot sun, Madame came out with a mosquito-net over her head to say good-bye, attended by the *mozo*, bearing a cup of coffee made in the perfect manner

which seems to be a heaven-born gift of the French.

A kind adieu did these good friends give me, and as Andreas was swift of foot, we were soon well on our way.

Save that the country was better cultivated, it presented no very remarkable beauties, but we passed some fine macaws in the trees; indeed, some of the smaller bushes were literally covered with these living jewels. Passing through the woods, the cooing of the doves, and the whistle of the *Cardinalis rubra* assimilated well with the distant murmur of the river, which they bounded to the extent of some miles. At length the crossing-place was reached; Andreas hailed the canoe, and the boatman, taking me over first, seated me in a shady wood-house, in company with a calf and two kids. Looking between the cracks of the planks, almost sheer down into the river, I felt disappointed at its muddy and unpicturesque appearance at this point; so inferior to the lovely Blanco. The banks plastered with mud and sedge, with here and there a few

unhappy-looking reeds penetrating the ooze, in company with shreds of leather and rope (remnants of former crossings), gave me the idea of a river in ruins: Palenque in all its variations seemed to breathe nothing but mystery and desolation.

Our halt for the day was on the outskirts of a pretty little assemblage of houses, all built with very high conical thatched houses. We bivouacked under some magnificent trees, and Andreas fetched from a garden in the neighbourhood a supply of the most excellent watermelons I have ever seen. A few pence bought six of these, and the owner of the garden kindly sent a rock-melon in addition, for the especial delectation of the Señora.

We thoroughly enjoyed our lunch; and as the grass and water were good, our animals also fed in comfort, although the halt here was necessarily a short one.

Our way was now through the real palm-forest of Honduras, lovely, tangled, uncultivated, damp, and picturesque.

All trace of path being lost, we mazed in and

out where the ground was firmest, and free from the sprawling uncovered roots of trees, and the festoons of parasite plants which trailed from above, bidding fair sometimes to encircle us and lift us off our mules. Absalom here would not have required an oak-tree.

We had just passed through a piece of marshy land, and emerged more into the open, when we saw two mounted figures coming towards us, the one on a handsome mule, the other on a well-bred-looking mare. The rider of the latter was an elegant-looking man; the other short and stout, but bearing what is called a good-natured-looking face.

Andreas exclaimed, "Here is Dr Pope, Señora — the short one; the other is Don Jésus Gonsalez, the Justice of the Peace of San Pedro Sula."

I immediately urged on my mule, and struck across the path in front of the riders. Bowing to the short man, I said, "I believe I have the honour of addressing the Rev. Dr Pope. I am Maria Soltera. Have you received the telegram I sent you from Comayagua?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE individual thus addressed hastened towards me, but it was plainly to be seen by his countenance that this meeting was the reverse of pleasant. Hastily rallying himself, he began to explain in a rapid tone that he had not replied to my telegram because he had hoped to reach Comayagua before I left it. He thought I would wait till I heard from him, and so forth.

I replied that I assumed he had left for Europe, and reminded him that in his last letter to me he had mentioned that this was probable, and that in consequence his agent would be left with full power to act in his stead.

"Oh yes,. yes," replied Dr Pope; "but my departure for Europe is delayed. I have a

great deal of law business to attend to—indeed I am going to Comayagua at this moment on a most important lawsuit, and cannot be back for a fortnight; in the meantime I have arranged with a lady at San Pedro Sula to receive you till I return."

"The delay is unfortunate," I answered; "but as I am nearly knocked up by much travelling and hardship, I shall be glad of a few days' idleness. Will you be good enough to give me the address of the house that I am to go to?"

The gentleman, turning round, addressed himself to the muleteer, speaking in remarkably good Castilian; then, continuing his conversation with me, he added—

"I am afraid you will find everything very rough, as I have not had time to order a mattress for your bed; but you have in your journey been accustomed to sleep on bare boards," he added, in a jaunty tone, "and so you will not mind."

"I beg your pardon, sir," I replied; "I have been provided with my own hammock; and I

take leave to say, that at the end of so long a journey, decent accommodation should be provided for me."

I spoke slowly, looking at him steadily; for by his later tone I felt that he could be very impertinent both with and without provocation.

"Doña Engracia will do all she can to make you comfortable, I am sure," he said apologetically; "but you must not expect English customs here."

To this I made no reply, but inquired how soon it would be before he returned to San Pedro Sula?

"It depends upon business," he replied. "I have also to attend a Synod to which the Bishop has summoned me; but I daresay I can get excused from being present at the meeting."

"Very strange, the Bishop did not mention this when I saw him at Comayagua," I answered.

"Have you seen the Bishop? Did you tell him you were coming here," he asked quickly, his face lighting up with a mingled expression of suspicion and interest.

"I paid my respects to his lordship, and I told him I was coming here. To my surprise the Bishop hardly spoke of you, and certainly he was quite ignorant of your having arranged to bring me here," I replied.

"Well, this is not the place wherein we can carry on a conversation on the matter. I regret," continued he, "that I cannot turn back with you now. Kindly go to the house of Doña Engracia, and I will write you an explanatory letter from Comayagua, and send it by special messenger. Your neighbour will be Don Pedro Sturm, a Norwegian doctor, who has lived many years in San Pedro Sula; he will gladly be of service to you."

The Justice of the Peace, who had waited patiently during this conversation, now came up and made some polite observations, and then we took leave and went on our several ways. But still the thought ran through my mind,—What could induce him to invite me to San Pedro Sula?

Leaving the plantations, we splashed through a broad stream, and, after riding over the ruins

POSADA NEAR SAN PEDRO SULA.

of a part of the late Honduras railway, we at dusk entered into San Pedro Sula.

The environs of this town are far from unpleasing, and several respectable houses, erected mostly by German merchants, lent an air of stability to the town which could not fail to impress a stranger favourably. It was some little time before we found the house to which we had been directed; and when we did so, it seemed to me that the name of Doña Engracia did not command much respect. We made our way to a mean-looking dwelling, and at our summons a most unprepossessing woman made her appearance at the door.

"Are you Doña Engracia?" inquired Eduardo, looking aghast.

"Yes," replied the woman, who was bare-necked and bare-headed, and had her chin bound up with a dirty rag; "and I suppose this is the lady I am to expect?"

"You are right," I answered. "Have you prepared any accommodation for me?"

"Enter, and see," was the reply.

I dismounted, and was ushered through an

outer room furnished with shelves. Upon these were laid a few vegetables and some plantains. Opening another door with a flourish, an inner room was revealed, which contained two beds, one of which was furnished with bedding of some sort, whilst the other was perfectly bare, with the exception of a large bull's hide, which was laid over the bars of the bedstead as an under-covering. Not a vestige of matting, or of any other furniture, did this apartment contain. It was miserable in the extreme.

"Is this the room assigned to me?" I asked at length, my heart really sinking into my boots.

"Si, Señora, si, y conmigo" (Yes, lady, yes, and with me). The *conmigo* was drawled out with a flourish.

"This will not do for me," I answered. "I *will* have a room to myself, and shall go straight to the best inn; where is it?" And I turned to go out.

The muleteer, Andreas, who had been standing on the outer step, now spoke, and with some indignation in his tone. "This is no place for you, Señora; you had better come

to Chicaramos. I know Chicaramos; you will be much better off there."

Eduardo was with the animals, and in high converse with a nice intelligent-looking lad, dressed in neat white raiment, wearing a Panama hat and a gay *pugaree*. "I am Don Pedro Sturm's servant—the doctor next door. He has sent me to show you the inn," the lad explained. "Permit me to accompany you to the Posada Chicaramos."

I thanked the lad gratefully, and we were soon on the march again. "What an extraordinary name!" I said to the lad. "Is Chicaramos a village or a suburb?"

"No, Señora," he replied; "Chicaramos is a woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes, Señora. Her real name is Francisca Ramos; the contraction of Francisca is Chica, and so the name has all got run into one. She is called Chicaramos all over the country. She is a wonderful woman."

I was too exhausted to inquire in what might consist the wonders of Chicaramos, but con-

tented myself by inwardly hoping that she might turn out to be an entirely different person from the one we had just left; and thus hoping, we rode up to the portal of the Posada Francisca Ramos, which was its polite designation.

The house was built in a square, the later and new addition being a *salon* and a billiard-room, which the owner had erected out of the money made by boarding and lodging the engineers and others concerned in building the Honduras railway. On this night this *salon* showed to the greatest advantage, as a ball was about to be held therein, and the long room was gay with light and flowers and brightly painted cane seats. It was for this reason that we were kept waiting a little at the half-opened door, although voices and exclamations were heard in all directions, and in all keys of the gamut.

Our guide proposed that we should go round to the other side, and enter the court-yard through the great gates, where we would most probably find some one to attend to us. This being done, a *mozo* flew towards us, declaring that the hotel was full on account of the ball.

The Señora could have refreshment, but not a room—all were engaged, &c., &c.

Never heeding this, we rode into the centre of the court-yard and dismounted. A handsome untidy-looking woman, dressed in a bright blue muslin dress, came up and looked at me, then turned away, and went into the house through a door on the right-hand side of the square.

"That is Chicaramos's daughter-in-law," said our new friend; "the wife of the *hijo mayor* (eldest son). They live on this side of the square, and their front door opens into the business street. She has gone to look for her husband."

Almost as he spoke a plain genteel-looking young man came out and advanced towards me. "My mother is busy," he said, "preparing for a ball, which is to take place here in an hour. The house is full, but if you will accept a bedroom in our part of it, it can be made ready at once. You will have to pass through our room, but you will not mind that."

This was the best thing I could do; and

accommodation being found for the muleteer and Eduardo, our guide took his leave, saying that his master, Don Pedro Sturm, would call on me on the morrow.

After a slight supper, which I took at a round table, with the son's wife staring at me from the opposite side, I was making ready to go to rest, when the door opened, and a lady, in a yellow silk dress, black lace trimming, and rich gold ornaments, entered. As she closed one door, the son's wife rose quickly, and rushed out at the other.

It seemed probable that these two women were not *d'accord*.

Chicaramos—for it was she—came forward in a graceful manner, and apologised for the negligent way in which I had been received, but expressed a hope that "*mi hijo mayor*" (my eldest son) had represented her properly.

She was a handsome woman; and from the manner in which she looked about, I saw that she managed well the affairs of her household. She then added that I might be kept awake by the music and the rattle of the billiard-balls,

but to-morrow, being Sunday, would be a quiet day.

I was conducted to a room on the ground-floor, which was paved with red tiles, and was as mean as possible in its surroundings. However, it did contain some crockery ware, and this fact of itself announced Chicaramos to be a well-to-do woman. Two window apertures, filled by massive shutters, which served to keep the room dark and cool, rejoiced my sight, as the window-frames were so wide that plenty of air could always enter, and mosquitoes, *ad libitum*, at night.

A voluble young Creole woman had been sent to help me, and she was loud in her expressions of surprise that a gentlewoman should have come to San Pedro Sula to superintend the school.

"But the doctor is quite done up now," added this damsel; "and you have had a long journey for nothing."

"Why did he bring me, I wonder?" was the answer I made.

She could not say.

"Where does the agent, Mr Brady, live?" I

inquired. "I wish to see him the first thing in the morning."

"He lives very near this," was the reply; "and I will go to him to-morrow morning."

"Thank you. Good night."

In spite of the drawbacks to repose enumerated by Chicaramos, I did sleep, and that long and well; and it was late (for Honduras)—almost seven in the morning—when Eduardo knocked, and announced that Andreas must return at once to Potrerillos, and that he only waited to be paid.

This business was transacted through the window; and then I told Eduardo that I would pay him during the day, and that he must look at once for other employment, for I could not afford to keep a servant longer.

"I have thought over this, Señora," answered the lad; "and as the billiard-marker is going to leave in a day or two, I shall apply for the place. You see, by this I can be near you, and do many little things for you till you leave for Puerto Cortez and for England. This is not a place for you, Señora."

"But I have not money enough with me to get out of it," I answered; "and, Eduardo, though I like to have you near me, I would rather you were not a billiard-marker: it is not good for you. Cannot you get some other occupation?"

"Not at present. I have made inquiries, and I am told, Señora, that Chicaramos's service is the best in the place."

Everything about the premises was very quiet, the day being Sunday, and the inmates being tired also with the dance of the preceding evening. Some large patient oxen were looking out of their open stall at the lower end of the court; and some cocks and hens chased one another in various directions; whilst a number of pigeons flew to and fro, and settled on the roofs of the various out-houses which surrounded this enclosure. A large pepper-tree overshadowed the lower buildings, and an impudent *lora* (small parrot) walked about and kept the whole in order. Altogether it was a pretty court for an inn.

The next sign of life was a rattling sound,

and the voice of woman, neither soft nor low, calling upon the household, and *hijo mayor* especially, to arise. Soon the voice travelled in my direction, and my hostess looked through the aperture at me, pushing the shutter back on its hinges as she bade me "Good morning."

"I am glad to see you, Señora," I said. "I want to arrange to stay here a short time till my business is concluded. What am I to pay you for board and lodging?—by the day, we had better say, as my affairs are uncertain."

Señora Ramos reflected a moment, and then said: "My charges are 5s. a-day; but if you remain by the week they will be a *peso* (4s. 2d.) per day. I hope you will stay, as I hear the charge of the public school is to be offered to you."

"I have not heard of this, Señora."

"I daresay not, but the matter was discussed among a few last night after the dance was over. Don Pedro Sturm, the head doctor here, is one of the municipal council, and he will call upon you to-morrow. They all talk before me," continued Chicaramos, elevating her head,

"as I am one of the principal people in the place."

I bowed at this, and told her that I did not feel justified in doing anything till I had come to an arrangement with Dr Pope.

"Oh, as to Pope," continued the Señora with the greatest contempt, "he can't do anything here. Ah, the money he owes me! And when I sent in my bill he threatened me with the law-courts. Ho, Vicente!" holloaed the Señora to a fat *mozo* who was slinking along the other side of the yard, "you have been too long in your bed. Chop up some wood, and tell Elenita to bring the Señora here a glass of milk."

Then she darted into my side of the house, and I heard her rattling up *mi hijo mayor* and his wife without the smallest ceremony, at the door of the room next to me.

A glass of milk was brought by the trim little girl called Elenita; and she told me that her grandmother bade her say that I had better dine in my own room always, as Señora Ramos never allowed meals to be taken in the *salon*

under any circumstances. And she thought the English lady would not like to dine in the public room, over which her daughter-in-law presided.

I thought it well to close with this arrangement, and had subsequently reason to congratulate myself that I had done so.

Mr Brady called the next morning, and it was very much to his own surprise that I informed him that he was Dr Pope's agent. He was a good-natured-looking young man, with some means, I was informed; and it was between him and Dr Pedro Sturm that Dr Pope was now living.

An entry in my journal of August 2, 1881, runs as follows: "Don Pedro Sturm called, and we had a discussion about my taking the public school. Nothing, however, can be arranged about this until the Governor of Santa Barbara comes here, which may be in a month, or in two months, or next year. Everything seems to be a matter of *mañana*,—and salary, a very unknown quantity."

Don Jésus Gonsalez also came to see me on

the same subject. This gentleman seems to have influence with the governor, and expressed his intention of writing to that dignitary, and urging the matter. By the way, I got set down by Chicaramos for taking exception at the name of Jésus for an ordinary appellation (although it is pronounced "Hesooz").

"I thought you were superior to cant, Señora," flared up my hostess. "You northern people have your Christian; and pray, what is the name of Christina but little Christ? *Caramba!*"

I confessed that I had not sufficiently studied the meaning of Christian names, but stuck to it that Christian seemed less familiar than the other sound.

For some mornings I had observed several little children in the court-yard, and I inquired if these belonged to the house?

"Not exactly," Elenita answered; "but we take care of one or two. That little Félipe is a poor orphan, and grandmother has adopted him; that other is not a child of *matrimonio*, but the *pobiecita* (poor thing) cannot help that,

and we promised the mother when she was dying to take care of her. Of course," continued the girl, "the father cannot come here, for the mother was our friend."

Ah! respectable, moral England, is it not too often the case with you, that the betrayed girl and her child are spurned to the dust, whilst the man goes free, and society opens her doors wide unto him, and even caresses him for the wrong he has done? I have often admired the kindness of the Hondureians to deserted children; most houses have one or two in charge, and the charity is given without ostentation and as a matter of course. These outcasts are received really as members of the family, and I have never heard of their entrance causing vexation or annoyance to any of the other members of it.

Dr Otto, the latest imported medical practitioner in San Pedro Sula, also called upon me. He was a young man of strong opinions, and never evinced the slightest qualm in calling a spade a spade. He was a German, and spoke English remarkably well. Being of very "ad-

vanced" opinions, he seemed to have but one object, and that was to make money as fast as possible. Chicaramos was a patient of his; but she was a match for him, as, his fees being high, she raised the rent of his house accordingly, the doctor being her tenant. The humour with which the lady confided this piece of diplomacy to me was enough to make a cat laugh.

With such a character, my correspondent, of course, could not be let off; indeed the young gentleman said so much, that I at last asked him if he were not afraid to venture such and such observations. "Not a bit," was the reply; "and now, can you bear to hear an unpleasant truth?"

"Really, sir, I have had to bear so much lately that I think I can stand anything."

"Very well. Now, you wonder why Pope brought you here; I will tell you. He is played out; he thought if you came that he would get a footing in the schoolhouse which would have been assigned for your use. This would give him a home; for the rest, he hoped you would bring a little money wherewith to

set a plantation going; in fact you told him so in one of your letters."

"How do you know this?" I asked aghast.

"It is simply told. A young lad, whom I know something about, was sitting with the fellow when the runner brought your letter. Pope was in an indiscreet mood, so he read a portion of the letter out, remarking, 'The lady has a little money, so I shall invite her to come.'"

This was, as I found, the true explanation; and as Dr Pope had no house of his own, the Government refusing to assign him one after the first year, the idea of taking up his abode in the schoolhouse must have been a most convenient scheme. All was frustrated by the people rising *en masse* against him and demanding his expulsion.

That a colony was never more recklessly ruined, let all the officials, English, Spanish, and Hondureian, tell.

Don Jésus brought his wife to visit me, and a very sweet young woman I found her to be. She often sent preserved fruits and chocolate,

and good Don Pedro Sturm sent in some light wine. These gifts were most acceptable, as Chicaramos's table was of the most coarse and meagre description, and the cooking was filthy. Many a day an egg and a cup of coffee were my only meal. My living could not have cost her more than fourpence a-day on the average; but it was in these ways that Chicaramos proved herself a wonderful woman. As Dr Otto often remarked, a mat, some raw plantains, and a stream of running water in the midst of the village, were all that was necessary to keep the inhabitants of San Pedro Sula alive. What could other people want with more?

The *alcaldé* often came to see me in the evenings, and to him I owe some of the pleasantest hours I spent in San Pedro Sula. He was a Scotchman by birth, but had become quite a naturalised Spaniard, speaking the language well. He it was who was keeping the key of the church, and this he handed over to the new priest one sunny morning, singing a pæan over the fact that this act completely ousted the late incumbent. "And now, my

dear lady," said he, "a ball is to be given in a night or two to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Government of Honduras, and I am charged by the municipal committee with this letter of invitation to you."

So saying, Don Juan pulled out an elegantly written note of invitation, addressed to me as Señora Maria, the English stranger.

At first I felt inclined to refuse, but, on reflection, I saw that it would be ungracious to do so. The hand of friendship had been so cordially held out that it was with lighter heart that I selected evening raiment to wear —the first time for many weeks—wherein to appear at the ball, given, as usual, at Chicaramos's *salon.*

Whilst I was dressing, I thought I heard voices in dispute in the part of the house occupied by *hijo mayor;* a door was banged with more than ordinary force after a scuffle from within; then all was silent. It was some one, perhaps, who had forced himself in to see the preparations. Thus I dismissed the subject from my mind. I should hardly have noticed

this, but I fancied I had previously heard footsteps approaching my apartment.

My toilet finished, I went into the *salon*, which was really very tastefully decorated and lighted. As nobody had come in, I drew a rocking-chair to the large entrance door, and sat watching the fire-flies as they powdered the grass opposite with their golden sparks. Brilliant lightning flashed in the far distance, which contrasted in fantastic guise with the gloom of an unusually still night, there being neither tingle of guitar nor rattle of billiard-balls, and few people were moving about.

Presently my attention was attracted to a white object moving in a straight line towards the house. What it was it was impossible to discover: perhaps a visitor arriving in fancy dress! The figure crossed the grass and stood before me. It was the Rev. Dr Pope, hatless, wearing a man's night-shirt over his clothes, and *bola* (Spanish for intoxicated).

Surprise held me to my seat, and prudence chained my tongue. He glared at me, and opened his lips as if to speak; then he looked

over my head into the *salon*, as if he were searching for some one, gave a lurch, turned on his heel, and was gone!

I rose, shut the door, and went through the *salon* into the *patio*. Eduardo was at a table washing some glasses; he anticipated my inquiry, for he said—

"Not now, Señora—I will come to you—the company has arrived."

The door which I had shut in such haste was thrown open, and the company walked in by twos and threes, and then seated themselves round the room, the principal ladies occupying the rocking-chairs. Soon followed the music; the musicians—three in number—playing some selected piece, now entered, and they were listened to with marked silence to the end.

I could not help contrasting this politeness with the rude inattention which I have seen displayed in circles of far higher pretension during the execution of instrumental music by some amateur, or even professional performer. In both cases the music seems to be regarded solely as an aid to conversation, and the per-

former receives the tribute of silence only when the instrument ceases to vibrate.

The young men moved among the ladies with well-bred ease, and when the *Lanza* was called every one stood up. The *Lanza,* I was told, is an old national dance, and it always stands first on the programme. The gentlemen select their partners, and those who do not join reseat themselves. In the old times referred to, the cavaliers carried short lances, and crossing these in some turns of the dance, the ladies passed beneath them.

The air of the dance is of itself very monotonous, the art of playing it consisting in strict emphasis on some few notes. The figure is not unlike the last—the fifth—in the set of our "Lancer Quadrilles." There is a good deal of advancing and retiring in ring, and an in-and-out chain, in the mazes of which each one purposely loses his partner. A movement, which I do not pretend to describe, brings her back again, and the whole is wound up with the graceful waltz.

Yes; as it is danced by this people, it is

graceful and even dignified. Strict attention is given to the execution of the step, and the time is often marked on the part of the gentleman by a sharp quick stamp on the floor. The figures of both waltzers undulate with the motion of the feet; indeed, the seriousness with which all is gone through, indicates that —in the mysteries of the dance at least—the Hondureians agree that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well.

The gentlemen dance quite as persistently as the ladies, and their manner in soliciting a partner is highly respectful always.

Between the dances, at intervals, refreshments were handed about; and these were upon a most limited scale, the whole consisting, generally, of a small glass of liqueur, a larger one of water, and a few little fancy cakes. Outside, at the table in the *patio*, some of the gentlemen could be descried indulging liberally in bottled beer and other liquids. This expenditure, and the hire of the *salon*, was Chicaramos's harvest. Such a thing as a ball-supper had never been heard of in the whole of the Honduras.

Cigars and cigarillos really seemed to be the bread of life here, to judge by the numbers which were smoked by both sexes in that entertainment. During the interval allowed to the musicians they smoked too, and long before the ball was over the floor had become quite disgusting from the expectoration; and the smell of tobacco which pervaded the *salon* from end to end was enough to poison a whole province.

I remained no longer, and withdrew unperceived to my den. The lightning was playing in the distance, but it was of the harmless summer kind, and so I watched it between my half-opened shutters without fear, indeed with somewhat of interest. The contrast between the solemn night, with its flashing zigzag lightning, which resembled an array of scimitars, withheld only by the Great Captain's hand from leaping down and scattering destruction on the earth, and the dance and glare, and paltry talk close by, was sufficiently striking. A few moments later, and Eduardo stood beneath the window.

"That drunken man was the doctor," said I, in a tone which might be taken either as assertative or interrogative.

"Yes, Señora; he came into the other house. *Hijo mayor* did his best to persuade him to retire; but it was of no use. I came in behind him, and not knowing who it was, I took him by the shoulders and put him into the street."

"He must have come round afterwards to the front door, where I was sitting," I said.

"That was it, Señora; I hear that he is afraid to see you, and keeps out of the way. He must have returned to enter the house, but he did not expect to meet with you."

"How do you know, Eduardo?"

"Chicaramos hears plenty of remarks from the people who come into the store, Señora; and so much news gets into the billiard-room."

"Well, when you have a spare moment, will you go to Dr Otto, and ask him to call upon me as soon as it may be convenient, to-morrow? Be sure and ask Señora Ramos's leave before you go."

"Certainly, Señora; good night."

The lad went his way, and I remained at the open shutter watching the lightning and thinking. This, then, was no scandal, as to the man's personal habits: under any circumstances, it would be neither safe nor proper to hold any appointment under such a person; and it was evident that very little could be done with the Justice of the Peace, or the Governor of Santa Barbara either. The latter, I knew, had promised to come to San Pedro Sula to inspect matters generally, and to establish a public school, eight times in so many months, and had failed to put in an appearance up to the present time. The *alcalde* was very much my friend; but it had been hinted to me, more than once, that this functionary was only anxious to keep me in the place because I was an Englishwoman, with whom he, being partly a Scotchman, found it pleasant to converse. Be this as it may, one thing was certain, Don Juan Jack, with all his goodwill, could not command either the Governor of Santa Barbara or the public funds of San Pedro Sula.

My best plan, therefore, was to leave as soon as possible; for though Chicaramos behaved well in the main, yet her *ménage* was so wretched that semi-starvation was what I was paying for at the rate of four shillings a-day. I was determined to consult Dr Otto, and then act as he should advise.

The doctor came early in the morning. Nothing could of course be said until the gentleman had gone through his usual objurgatory language against the Spaniards, the natives, the Governor, Don Juan Jack, and the inhabitants generally and severally;—one was a rascal; the Justice of the Peace was a dawdle; the Governor never kept his word; and Don Pedro Sturm was a fool. Chicaramos had the brains of the whole lot.

"Now, Dr Otto, if any one else had declaimed against any one of these persons in the way you have done, you would be the very first to defend him. I do not like to hear a word against Don Pedro Sturm. He has been kind to me."

"Well, all right; he is kind, certainly."

"I want your wisdom now to bear upon my affairs. I am certain it will not do to stay here; both time and money are being wasted, and I hear nothing can be done about the public school till the Governor of Santa Barbara arrives."

"Don't you rely on his coming; and the chances are if he does come—and I don't believe he will, for he is like all the rest of these dawdling, offputting, gandering idiots——"

"Now, doctor, no abuse. I want to know if you think I had better write at once to Mr De Brot, the consul at Puerto Cortez, and ask him to arrange the necessary business for getting money from England to take me away. The truth is, I feel weaker, and I think I have a little fever on me now, and I dread being ill here."

"If you get ill you can't go; write to Mr Albany Fonblanque, the consul at New Orleans: that will be quicker. Mr De Brot is at his country place just now, on one of the islands, so there would be delay if you

consult him. Fonblanque is a thorough man of business, and if you write and state the case plainly, he will give you the best attention. The Wanderer will sail from Puerto Cortez in three days, and your letter will be in time—that is to say, if that infernal 'Maquina' does not break down, or they forget the mail-bag, or devise some blunder which could only occur in these regions. Now, mind you write a short intelligible letter to Fonblanque, and to the point."

"Trust me. I think I will ask Mr Fonblanque to send it on to my lawyer in London," I replied.

"Yes, that is a sensible idea. Now, never mind more business, but look here, Mopsey has come to see you."

As he spoke, the doctor lugged out of his capacious pocket a huge silk pocket-handkerchief, which was tied at the four corners in a loose knot. He opened this, and forth came Mopsey, the little pet parrot.

"You don't mean to say that you carry the bird about in this fashion?" I asked.

"Why, yes; you see he mopes when I go out, and is utterly miserable, and so I shall carry him when I go my rounds. They are so gentle and lovable are these *loras*."

Certainly Mopsey was a true specimen of what Dr Otto said of the race. It was curious to see the little bird climbing up his shoulder and sitting on his head, and testifying her delight in many caressing ways; the doctor's fiery, excited-looking face being at the same time smoothed into a somewhat benevolent mould, as he rendered up his finger as a perch for his pet and addressed her as "Du."

We chatted a little while, and I could not help wishing that this gentleman, so brilliant and agreeable, could bestow a little of the goodwill which he testified towards the animal creation upon the human portion of it also. Some bitter wrong, or maybe, a long course of being misunderstood, (and what more hardening to the spirit than this?) must have turned a naturally good disposition into gall; and it was only by an occasional flash of sympathy, expressed as if he were ashamed of it, that I discovered

that Dr Otto possessed a vein of human feeling.

One thing I had resolved upon, and that was, that some final understanding must be come to with Dr Pope, and that if I had an interview with him, it should take place in the presence of witnesses. I therefore wrote to Dr Sturm, in whose house he was staying, and also to the lawyer of San Pedro. Sula, stating my intention of applying for my travelling expenses, and asking for a legal opinion upon the matter.

These two gentlemen called upon me on the following day, and informed me that at first Dr Pope expressed himself willing to see me in their presence, but afterwards shirked doing so, and had requested them to apply to me for a copy of his letter in which he had so specially engaged me to come to San Pedro Sula.

I felt inclined to refer his reverence to his own copy of the letter written to me; but as it was important to see what he meant to do, I consented, and sent him a copy of his letters, adding that I retained duplicates of all my correspondence with him.

This last piece of information, I was told, considerably surprised him, and the next day I received a note from the lawyer, saying that Dr Pope did not look upon that letter as an agreement; but he proposed, if I would consent, that the matter should be referred to Mr De Brot, the consul at Puerto Cortez, for arbitration. I was strongly advised to accept these terms, the lawyer adding that Mr De Brot was an upright and most conscientious man.

"You have had quite expense enough," said this gentleman when I saw him the next day, "and I do not wish to hamper you with law. The proposal came from Pope himself; it is no suggestion of mine, or of Don Pedro Sturm. I may add that if you see fit to accept this proposition, Dr Pope will undertake to pay your expenses to Puerto Cortez; you can then see the consul personally."

The dismay of this generous gentleman was indeed only overpowered by his disgust, when, on the following morning, he found that Dr Pope had stolen off on his mule during the

night to Puerto Cortez, forgetting to leave the funds for my journey behind him.

This, however, was of little consequence, as I could despatch my letters to the consul by the train, and I would prefer going to the port when I could be sure that I was leaving the country. So I wrote my letters and waited patiently.

Little remains to be recorded of this weary stay at San Pedro Sula, and my journal at this period runs only that one day telleth another and one night certifieth another. A touch of fever; no news from the Governor of Santa Barbara about the school; a letter of promises and no results from one Government official or another; a pleasant chat with the *alcalde*,—and this was about the sum of my life for upwards of a month.

At length came a letter from Mr Fonblanque announcing that money had been placed in his hands, and that he would send a sum by the Wanderer steamer, which would sail in a few days from New Orleans to Puerto Cortez. Telegraph and steam and business-like lawyers in

London had greatly facilitated matters, and I was free to depart at once.

As the Wanderer steamer only remained at Puerto Cortez twenty-four hours, and I was anxious to get away quickly, I found I must start without delay.

Dr Otto, who had gone down to the port on business, sent me a telegram, desiring me to start without an hour's delay, in order to catch the steamer for New Orleans.

As the train for Puerto Cortez did not run for two days, I was obliged to ride; and thus, from force of circumstances, I have traversed the province of Spanish Honduras from Amapala to Puerto Cortez on mule-back. Don Pedro Sturm got mules and a confidential man for me, and bidding adieu to Chicaramos, I set off for Puerto Cortez.

Although the distance was under forty miles, the road was so abominably bad, and the detentions in consequence were so great, that it was literally impossible to reach the port before the Wanderer sailed.

It was at the ranche of General Z——, where

I had halted for refreshment, that I was told this: "You cannot ride out at night," said the general. "Man as I am, I would not attempt to do so. The road is dangerous in daylight. I cannot allow you to pass my door; so pray, Señora, dismount and stay here till to-morrow. You can take time, and it will only be a detention of fourteen days before the Wanderer returns."

Accustomed as I had been to delay and disappointment, this was a bitter trial, and I could not refrain a burst of tears. Everything seemed to go against me. The general turned away to call his niece; her pleasant face acted like a cordial, and after a few moments I was able to say that I would take the advice so generously proffered.

"You surely must have been late in setting off," said General Z——; "under the best of circumstances you could only have reached Puerto Cortez an hour before the steamer sailed."

I handed him the telegram which Dr Otto had despatched.

"When did you get this?" he inquired.

"Late last night."

"You ought to have had it six hours earlier or more. This telegram has been delayed. Some fault in the telegraph office,—nobody knows, or will know, why; but it is very provoking."

It was indeed, but there was no use in repining; and as I knew that there was a respectable house to go to, kept by Madame B——, in Puerto Cortez, I tried to make the best of the matter. My chief anxiety was about the money.

"The purser of the Wanderer has very probably left that in the charge of Mr De Brot for you," he said. "Nobody will wonder at your non-appearance; they are all up to the ways of the country. Go in and take some refreshment, and then I will escort you and Anita to the corral. I have some fine horses to show you."

I took leave of the general and his pretty niece in better spirits on the following morning, and as haste was not now necessary, I was more at liberty to admire the wild magnificent country which extends to within a few miles of the port.

In addition, I bore with the greatest *sang froid* the total immersion of the baggage-mule

in a swamp, and the delay and worry of getting her out again. This accident happened, fortunately, near a native village, and so assistance was easily obtained. Owing to the detention which this occasioned, it was late before we reached Madame's house.

This good lady was on the look-out for us, and her brother helped me from the saddle almost before the mule had come to a standstill. "We are not astonished at your being late," he said, "but all is arranged. Mr De Brot has got your money, and we will make you comfortable here till the Wanderer returns, and my sister's charges will be moderate."

How many, how very many simple kind people are there after all in Honduras!

Puerto Cortez is not much better than a sandy swamp, only waiting an opportunity to slip into the sea and be lost for ever as a human dwelling-place. Its only sight is at the shed which forms the terminus of the railway communication between it and San Pedro Sula. There, piled up in rust and dust, are to be seen heaps of material imported to form the railway of

Honduras. Bolts, tires, wheels, rails, chains, and various other of the material necessary to make a railway, are to be found piled up in profusion in this place; and the Hondureian points at it with a kind of grim delight as he tells you that thousands of pounds are rotting there.

Let us hope that this waste is only temporary. Late letters inform me that Dr Fritz Gartner and Mr Shears, American citizens, have entered into a contract with the Government of Honduras for the navigation of the Ulua river and its tributaries, the Venta and the Blanco. This accomplished, the reconstruction of the railway is sure to follow.

The *ménage* of Madame B—— was on a much more liberal scale than that of Chicaramos; and in consequence my strength partially returned to me, although I suffered fearfully from the sand-flies, which at Puerto Cortez are minute demons. Mr De Brot was also kind and attentive, but, as a matter of business, Dr Pope's name had been scarcely mentioned.

At length a missive, which ran as follows, was handed to me one hot morning:—

"I, John Frederic De Brot, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Puerto Cortez :—

"Whereas Miss Mary —— and the Rev. Dr W. L. Pope have consented to submit to my arbitration the question in dispute between them, about the unnecessary expenses accrued to the former in a useless voyage to this country; and whereas I declared myself willing to accept the office of arbitrator in this matter, I have come to the following decision, based on the letters and other documents presented to me :—

"That the Rev. Dr Pope pay to Miss Mary —— the half of the expenses she has incurred in her voyage to and from this country.

"Given under my hand and seal, this tenth day of October 1881.

(Signed) "J. F. De Brot,
British Consul."

"You will never get a penny from Pope, I am sure," said Mr De Brot, when I called to thank him for this document. "Still, I think it will be a satisfaction to you to have your own statements thus, as it were, publicly substantiated;

I only wish that you had insisted upon a lega lagreement before you started, but in the face of such a letter as Pope's last one to you, I do not wonder at this idea not occurring to you."

"The matter at this point, Mr De Brot," I replied, "just resolves into this: nothing succeeds like success. Had this matter turned out fortunately, every one would have said, What an enterprising woman 'Soltera,' is! so sensible to go abroad, where there is so much more opening for employment,—and all the rest of it. As it is, I am considerably out of pocket, and many of my friends, I feel sure, will be more ready to blame than to sympathise with me in the matter. However, the world on the whole is kind, and I shall be able to work the lost money back in some way; you know 'Voy con Dios' is my motto."

Mr De Brot asked if I had thought of putting the affair into the law-courts of Honduras, in the case of Dr Pope's refusing to pay.

"Certainly not," I replied; "it would be a

degradation not only to myself, but also to my family. Your decision establishes my claim and my honour; for the rest, I am content to let this unworthy man go his way." As I said this, the quaint old Italian proverb ran through my mind—"Evil does not always come to do hurt."

"I am glad to hear you say this," replied the consul; "but I boil with indignation when I think of this man. However, you are better off than many."

"May I ask if you have seen Dr Pope since he received his copy of the arbitration?"

"He came to my office last night, but he was in such a state that I refused to see him. Depend upon me, if I can get any money out of him for you, I will do so."

"I suppose," continued Mr De Brot, his handsome kind face lighting up with a smile, "after this experience you will never believe more in anything or anybody?"

"Not quite so bad as that," I replied: "has not the golden cord of others' kindness run like a string to hold me up through all my troubles?

Believe me, I am not ungrateful, and I shall often think with pleasure of the people of Honduras."

My journal further runs, 14th October 1881:—

"Received a kind note from Mrs Barlee, asking me to spend a few hours at Government House at Belize, when the Wanderer should touch there on her way to New Orleans.

"The captain and some of the passengers of the ship Cyprio have just come in from Belize.

"*Saturday*, 15*th*.—A red-letter day, and quite a return to civilisation. Spent day on board the Cyprio, and played whist and the piano. Mrs Kindred, Mrs Brodie, Mrs Brockeley, Mr M'Cullock, and the chief officer, together with the captain. What people could be kinder or nicer?

"*Sunday*, 16*th*.—Called to say 'adieu' to good, kind Mr De Brot.

"*Monday*, 17*th*.—Sailed by the Wanderer for New Orleans. On the 19th arrived at

Belize, and spent a delightful afternoon with Mr and Mrs Barlee. Their sympathy and kindness I will never forget.

"*October 24th.*—Arrived at New Orleans. Whether it is the reaction or the development of incipient illness, I know not, but here I must stay and rest. My strength is gone; there is neither fight, nor struggle, nor travel in me. Mr Albany Fonblanque has procured me quarters in the house of the lady where he himself resides, and I hear Mrs Glenn is the best housekeeper and nurse in the world. Mr Fonblanque tells me that it is semi-starvation which ails me, and that the beautiful winter season of New Orleans will set me up."

So I made up my mind to remain and make my home for a time in the elegant comfortable house of Mrs Glenn.

A few weeks quite restored me. How could it be otherwise, with the surroundings I have described? Who can read the works of Albany Fonblanque without feeling certain that in his society, and in that of the friends he gathered round him, "Soltera" found enjoyment and rest?

From this delightful "winter city" I have come home, poorer (God help me!) but wiser, and happy. The law of kindness has turned what was bitter into sweet. To this law I appeal, should "Soltera" be fortunate enough to find readers of her account of her ride across Spanish Honduras. *Vale.*

THE END.

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